

BRITISH EDUCATION:

Or, The SOURCE of the

D I S O R D E R S

O F

GREAT BRITAIN.-



BRITISH EDUCATION  
OF THE  
DIPLOMA  
OF  
GREAT BRITAIN



# BRITISH EDUCATION:

Or, The SOURCE of the

D I S O R D E R S

O F

## GREAT BRITAIN.

B E I N G

An ESSAY towards proving, that the Immorality,  
Ignorance, and false Taste, which so generally pre-  
vail, are the natural and necessary Consequences of  
the present defective SYSTEM of EDUCATION.

By THOMAS SHERIDAN, A. M.

Hoc opus, hoc studium, parvi properemus, et ampli,  
Si volumus patriæ, si nobis vivere chari. HOR.

A N E W E D I T I O N,

Revised by the AUTHOR, with Additions and Alterations.

---

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BRITISH EDUCATION

GR EAT BRITAIN.

BY THOMAS SHERIDAN, A.M.

Si volumus utrumque, ita utrumque dabitur.

NOT RECORDED

Reviewed by the Australian and New Zealand



## DEDICATION.

**I**F there be in England one man of consequence who has understanding enough to comprehend the following Work, and who has virtue and spirit enough to exert his best endeavours to carry into execution the Plan of Education founded upon this Work, to him is this book inscribed; and the author will esteem himself happy to have an opportunity of prefixing such a name to a future Edition.



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## TO THE READER.

**I**T is now some years since this Work first made its appearance in the world, upon a subject of the greatest importance. The end of it was no less than to lay open the true source of all the disorders and evils under which this country has so long laboured; and, at the same time, to point out an easy, safe, and adequate method of cure. Nay, farther, to shew that there was so much virtue in the proposed remedy, as not only to restore us to perfect health, but afterwards to raise Great Britain, in every thing that can dignify human nature, or contribute to the happiness of society, to such a pitch, as far to exceed all other nations that either do, or ever did, exist upon earth. Surely, this was an object that demanded the highest attention, and it was



viii TO THE READER.

well worth while to examine with the utmost care, whether what was advanced upon this subject was well-founded. Accordingly, it did undergo a strict examination by many persons of distinguished learning and capacity ; and the author can now with confidence affirm, upon the authority of some of the coolest, clearest, and ablest heads in Great Britain, that he has fully made out his point. As a collateral proof of this, it is certain, that there never has been any attempt made to answer or refute the Work, or any part of it ; tho', could they have done it with any prospect of success, it was incumbent on all those who are concerned in the present mode of education, to have made the attempt.

The Author had promised, if the Work met with approbation, to lay before the Public a Plan of Education



TO THE READER. ix

tion for the young nobility and gentry of this country, conformable to the principles laid down in his Book. Many unforeseen events, of which it is not necessary to inform the world, retarded his design; so that it is but lately he has been able to publish such a plan. Let it be examined with candour; and he will venture to say, that there is no one of common sense who will not allow that the execution of it would be attended with the greatest advantages both to the state and to society in general; and those of a deeper reach of thought, would evidently see, that it would be the sure way, as the great bishop of Cloyne has, it is hoped, prophetically said, 'not only to prevent our final ruin, but also to render us a more happy and flourishing people than ever.'

If



## X TO THE READER.

If the importance of the subject will not attract attention ; if the plainest conviction of the truths set forth in the plan, and of the practicability of the design, will not rouse those whose business, whose duty, whose interest it is to see it carried into execution, it would be a more fatal symptom of our approaching destruction than all that have yet appeared. It would be a proof of so profound a lethargy, added to a complication of the worst disorders, in the body politic, as must be a sure fore-runner of dissolution ; and of such insanity of mind, as can be accounted for upon no other principle but one,

*Quos Jupiter vult perdere prius dementat.*

Those whom God has doomed to destruction, he first infatuates.

CON-

# C O N T E N T S.

## B O O K I.

CHAP. I. <i>OF the Power of Education.</i>	Page 1
CHAP. II. <i>Our present System of Education considered.</i>	17
CHAP. III. <i>Of the principles upon which a system of education should be founded.</i>	34
CHAP. IV. <i>Of the different principles of the different governments known in the world.</i>	37
CHAP. V. <i>That our constitution can not be supported by any of these three principles, tho' they may be all useful to it.</i>	40
CHAP. VI. <i>The necessity of another principle to regulate these.</i>	41
CHAP. VII. <i>Of the power and extent of this principle.</i>	44
CHAP. VIII. <i>Of the principle of virtue.</i>	45
CHAP. IX. <i>The methods taken in antient education to promote and encourage virtue.</i>	46
CHAP. X. <i>The study of oratory necessary to us in every point where it was so to the antients.</i>	48
CHAP.	

CHAP. XI. *That there is one point in which the study of oratory is essentially necessary to us, but was not at all so to the anti-ents.* 52

CHAP. XII. *Though virtue might have been a sufficient principle to have supported the antient republicks, yet it would not be sufficient to support our form of government, notwithstanding it be equally necessary to it.* 54

CHAP. XIII. *That the cause of the failure and decay of the principle in those, was, that the means to support it were inadequate; and that those means, or indeed any of human invention, must be of infinitely less efficacy with us than with them.* 58

CHAP. XIV. *That from the nature of our situation and the peculiarity of our circumstances, nothing could possibly make us, or continue us a great and flourishing people, but an immediate revelation from God.* 70

CHAP. XV. *Of the means by which the principle of religion may be supported, and the chief cause of it's decay shewn to arise from a material defect in education.* 81

CHAP.

C O N T E N T S.      xiii

- CHAP. XVI. *Ill consequences of this defect both to church and state, and the great advantages which would result to both from the study of oratory.* 139

B O O K II.

- CHAP. I. *Of the excellence and use of the Greek and Roman languages.* 165
- CHAP. II. *That the perfection of the Greek and Roman languages was chiefly owing to the study and practice of oratory.* 176
- CHAP. III. *That the Greek and Roman languages owed their stability and permanence to oratory. With some animadversions upon the neglect of studying the English language.* 182
- CHAP. IV. *Causes of the neglect hitherto of studying the English language.* 193
- CHAP. V. *That those causes no longer operate, nor are of any force. The great necessity of studying our language shewn.* 206
- CHAP. VI. *That the means to arrive at perfection in our language are equally in our power, that our inducements to it are*



*are stronger, and that we might in all probability compass our end in a shorter space of time, and with less labour, than the Romans did.* 224

CHAP. VII. *That if our language were once brought to a standard, we have more powerful and certain means to fix and preserve it in it's state of perfection, than they had.* 230

CHAP. VIII. *That we have it more in our power to propagate our language in other countries, and make it universal, than they had.* 254

CHAP. IX. *Whether our language be capable of a sufficient degree of perfection to make the study of it general, and to afford as good a prospect of it's duration as the Latin.* 261

CHAP. X. *Of the means whereby our language may be refined and ascertained.* 350

### B O O K III.

CHAP. I. *Of the liberal arts, and their source.* 361

CHAP. II. *That the liberal arts never flourished, or arrived at perfection in any coun-*

# CONTENTS. xv

- country, however otherwise remarkable for knowlege, and ingenuity, where the study and practice of oratory was neglected.* 367
- CHAP. III. *That in those countries where the liberal arts arrived at their highest pitch of glory, there were no traces of them, previous to the study of oratory.* 369
- CHAP. IV. *That the liberal arts always followed oratory in their progress towards perfection; arrived at their summit soon after that did; declined as that declined; and, when that was banished, wholly disappeared.* 371
- CHAP. V. *That it is much more probable that oratory raised and supported the liberal arts, than that the liberal arts raised and supported oratory.* 377
- CHAP. VI. *Of Poetry, Musick, and Painting, and their Source.* 382
- CHAP. VII. *That it is almost impossible that the masters in these several arts should arrive at perfection, without the lights and assistance borrowed from oratory.* 410
- CHAP. VIII. *Of the encouragements given to the several artists during the flourishing state of oratory.* 425

CHAP.

xvi CONTENTS.

CHAP. IX. *Objection to the above hypothesis, drawn from the works of the modern artists; and answer to the objection.* 435

CHAP. X. *That the supposed perfection of modern works, has not been settled by any absolute standard, but by comparison only.*

449

CHAP. XI. *That the few originals, which have been produced since the revival of the arts, have been indebted for their chief value to oratory.*

453

CHAP. XII. *Good consequences to Great Britain, should the above opinions be found to be true.*

462

CHAP. XIII. *Whether it is not probable that the arts might arrive at as high a pitch in this country, as at Athens or Rome?*

484

CHAP. XIV. *The chief disorders of Britain traced to one source.*

498



BRITISH



B R I T I S H  
E D U C A T I O N , &c.

BOOK I. CHAP. I.

*Of the Power of Education.*

**A** MIDST the general outcry  
against the enormity of the  
times, the endeavours of our  
best writers and preachers to  
reform them, the attention of the legis-  
lature, so often roused of late by his  
majesty's paternal care, and the number  
of penal laws made to check the progress  
of vice, the torrent is still too strong to  
be resisted, and these weak damms are  
borne away : irreligion, immorality, and  
corruption, are visibly increased, and daily  
gather new strength.

**B**

**If**



If a physician should find his patient still growing worse under the regimen he prescribed, he will not obstinately persist in the same course; but will try new remedies. Yet if he be not acquainted with the source of the disorder, he may go through the whole materia medica to no purpose. The first step towards a cure, is to know the cause of the disease, and when that is removed the effect will cease of course.

When a nation is sunk to a certain degree of depravity and corruption, penal laws are of little force. Their efficacy depends upon their execution; and when that is rendered difficult, or impossible, they become of little or no use. When the bulk of mankind are good, it is the interest of each individual to detect and punish a villain: when they are bad, it becomes their interest to screen him from punishment, for crimes, of which they are equally guilty, and consequently equally liable to the same punishment. Thus the sting of the law is taken out, or often turned upon the innocent. The few good are awed by the powerful confederacy  
amongst



## CHAP. I. EDUCATION. 3

amongst the numerous wicked. If they attempt to bring an offender to justice, they are often branded with the name of informers; they are baffled by pack'd juries, and suborned witnesses: or if they carry their point, it is at such an expence as will deter most people from following their example. At such a crisis, the virtuous few, finding their endeavours to serve the publick ineffectual, or even dangerous, retire as soon as possible from the busy world, and leave the field open to the vicious to range in at large without controul. They who still keep their posts, and remain in the legislature as guardians to their country, may waste their time in making new penal laws, for new crimes; and the fertile invention of man in wickedness, will furnish them with sufficient employment. These laws, if not executed, are at best useless; but when swelled to an immoderate size, become a greater evil than the disease.

When the law is trampled under foot, and punishment no longer dreaded, how can we expect that weaker instruments will have any effect? The edge of satyr

cannot prevail against men, who cloath themselves with vice, as with an armour; nor will the sting of ridicule be felt by those, who are invulnerable to shame.

Such symptoms in a state are sure prognosticks of approaching ruin; and its end cannot be far off, unless prevented by adequate remedies. As the disease arises from an universal corruption of manners, it can be cured only by a general reformation. Our manners depend upon our notions and opinions, and our opinions and notions are the result of education. This, and this alone, must necessarily be the source of all our disorders; and here, and here only, must we therefore look for a cure.

Wisdom and knowlege, are the parents of religion and virtue; folly and ignorance, of vice and impiety: where wisdom and knowlege are wanting in a nation, virtue and religion will hardly be found; and when ignorance and folly reign, vice and impiety will be seen triumphant. The only way then to bring about a reformation of manners, is to restore wisdom, and knowlege. This can  
be

be effected only by a right system of education. Wisdom, knowledge, and consequently virtue, are not to be acquired any other way. If we look into the history of all nations, we shall find their flourishing state owing to the proper education of their youth. What but that raised the petty state of Athens to its amazing pitch of glory and power? What but that made Rome the mistress of the world? By that the Chinese government hath remained unaltered upwards of two thousand years, notwithstanding several intestine commotions, and several conquests by foreign enemies. Nay it still continues the same, without the least variation, altho' it was intirely subdued by the Tartars, in whose possession it has been for more than a century.

But the prodigious power of education was never seen so strongly as in the Spartan commonwealth; for by the force of that alone, was their state preserved in vigour for upwards of seven hundred years, upon principles directly opposite to the nature of man. How much greater then must its power be in assisting nature? Let



us cast our eyes towards the now barbarous Africk, once the source of arts and sciences; to what owes she her present deplorable condition, but to the want of education? Whilst on the other hand, it is by that alone the northern and western regions of Europe, once rude and savage, have risen to their present splendour. So that it is evident there is no essential difference from nature between men of different regions of the earth, but that the whole depends upon the culture of their understandings\*. Nay such is the power of a well-disciplined mind, that it hath been known that one or two persons only of eminence in a state, so trained, have suddenly raised their country from obscurity to glory.

Thebes, and Macedon, on account of their stupidity, and ignorance, were held in such contempt by the other states of

\* When Chaldea and Ægypt were learned and civil, Greece and Rome were rude and barbarous, as all Ægypt and Syria now are, and have been long. When Greece and Rome were at their heights in arts and sciences, Gaul, Germany, Britain, were as ignorant and barbarous, as any parts of Greece or Turkey can be now.

Sir-William Temple, essay upon ancient and modern learning.

## CHAP. I. EDUCATION. 7

Greece, that their names were proverbial: yet, when in the former of these, Epaminondas and Pelopidas arose, enlightened by the precepts of Lysis, one of the greatest philosophers of the age, they raised the Theban name to such a pitch of glory, as to obscure all others, and struck terror into the mighty commonwealths of Sparta, and of Athens. It is very remarkable also, that Philip, born in Macedon, happening to be a hostage in the house of the father of Epaminondas at Thebes, received the benefits of the same education, under the same tutor; and that this man afterwards raised the poor despised state of Macedon so high, as to give law to all Greece, and in some time to the greatest part of the then known world. It was to the extraordinary care taken in his education by his father, that Rome owed her Scipio, the preserver of his country, the conqueror of Carthage, one of the best men, and greatest heroes of antiquity.

When Paulus Æmilius conquered Perseus, he looked down upon his riches with contempt, and would suffer his sons to take nothing away but his library, which

he looked upon as containing true mines of real treasure.

There need not examples from history to prove, that the well-being of a state depends upon the education of their youth. There cannot be a good, and wise community, made up of foolish and vicious individuals; and individuals cannot be made wise or good, but by education. If that be faulty or wrong, the effects will necessarily shew themselves in the lives of men. When the fountain head is polluted, the streams which flow from it cannot be clear.

The power of the first impressions made upon the minds of men, and the influence they have upon their conduct ever after, is a beaten topick: holy writ, and the classick writers, abound in sentences to this effect; and history furnishes us with innumerable examples. Of which there is none more remarkable than that of Alexander the great; whose early mind received such a tincture, and imbibed such notions of false glory, from the lessons of a servile flattering tutor, Leonides, as could not afterwards

## CHAP. I. EDUCATION. 9

terwards be effaced by the pains and skill of an Aristotle.

From education alone have flowed all the various customs, and manners; all the different institutions, civil, and religious; all the several systems, moral, and political, of the several nations of this peopled earth. If we are more unsettled in our notions, and consequently more irregular in our actions, than any other nation under the sun; if what the late bishop of Cloyne says be true, that, 'The pretensions and discourses of men throughout these kingdoms would, at first view, lead one to think that the inhabitants were all politicians; and yet, perhaps, political wisdom hath in no age or country, been more talked of or less understood. Licence is taken for the end of government, and popular humour for its origin. No reverence for the laws, no attachment to the constitution, little attention to matters of consequence, and great altercation upon trifles; such idle projects about religion, and government, as if the public had both to chuse; a general contempt of all authority, divine and human; an indifference



‘rence about the prevailing opinions,  
‘ whether they tend to produce order, or  
‘ disorder, to promote the empire of God,  
‘ or the devil: these are the symptoms  
‘ that strongly mark the present age.’ If  
all this, I say, be so, whence can it pro-  
ceed but from a defective education, which  
not taking care to settle the notions of men  
upon the basis of right reason, leaves their  
unfurnished minds open to receive any opi-  
nion which chance may throw in their  
way, which caprice may hunt after, or  
inclination grasp at?

Evident as this point is, is it not amaz-  
ing, as if men were blind, or infatuated,  
that they have not hitherto turned their  
thoughts to examine the only source, from  
which all the happiness or misery of the  
nation must necessarily flow? That they  
should employ their time either in crying  
out against the increasing tide of corrup-  
tion, which threatens a deluge to the land;  
or in endeavouring to raise damms in those  
places where the breadth, depth, and ra-  
pidity of the waters, baffle all the efforts  
of man to stop their course? And though  
they daily find their labours ineffectual,  
and

and likely to continue so from the violence of the torrent, yet that they should obstinately persist in the same course, without once going to the fountain head; which they might not only purge, and cleanse, but with ease divert its course into several channels, so as to send forth salubrious streams to water the whole land.

Important as it is to the state, education hath never once claimed the attention of the legislature since its first institution. Tho' it was established in times of great ignorance, and consequently must be supposed to be very defective, yet have we gone on in the same system, with the same blind obedience, that the Roman catholicks pay to the infallibility of the pope. Interesting as it is to every individual of society, yet no one topick has less employed the pens of our writers. Whether it be that they were blinded by prejudice in favour of a method in which they themselves were trained; or that the difficulty of a reformation deterred them from the attempt, so it is, that we have in our whole language but two treatises of any note expressly written on that subject. The first, a short

a short one by Milton, the other, by Mr. Locke. The former clearly points out the faults and defects in our education, but the remedies proposed are too strong for men of a sickly habit of body, made weak and feeble by long disease. They are calculated only for those of robust athletick constitutions, labouring under small disorders; or, as he himself expresses it, 'This is not a bow for every man to shoot in, but will require sinews almost equal to those which Homer gave Ulysses.' The other by Mr. Locke, is only an attempt to mend and patch our present system, such as it is, and to make some alterations in it; but is far from containing any endeavour towards extending it. This he himself acknowledges in the latter part of his treatise, where he says, 'Tho' I am now come to a conclusion of what obvious remarks have suggested to me concerning education, I would not have it thought that I look on it as a just treatise on that subject. I have touched little more than those heads which I judged necessary for the breeding of a young gentleman; and have now published  
those

‘ those my occasional thoughts with this  
 ‘ hope, that tho’ this be far from being a  
 ‘ complete treatise on this subject, or such  
 ‘ as that every one may find what will just  
 ‘ fit his child in it, yet it may give some  
 ‘ small lights to those whose concern for  
 ‘ their dear little ones makes them so irre-  
 ‘ gularly bold, that they dare venture to  
 ‘ consult their own reason in the education  
 ‘ of their children, rather than wholly to  
 ‘ rely on old custom.’

In all well-regulated states, the two principal points in view in the education of youth, ought to be, first, to make them good men, good members of the universal society of mankind; and in the next place to frame their minds in such a manner, as to make them most useful to that society to which they more immediately belong; and to shape their talents, in such a way, as will render them most serviceable to the support of that government, under which they were born, and on the strength and vigour of which, the well-being of every individual, in some measure depends. If neither of these points are provided for in our system, I cannot see how

we



we are to expect good men or good subjects. Nay the contrary must in general be the consequence, for the mind of man being active will necessarily find itself employment; if our youth are not trained in the right way, they will probably go wrong; if they are not taught to do good, they will be likely to commit evil.

This point is so obvious, that it might seem unnecessary to support it either by reason or authority; and yet so little attention has been paid to it, that it may not be wholly useless to quote the sentiments of a man upon this head, who is allowed to have been possessed of the deepest penetration \*. In his epistle dedicatory to his treatise on education, he has the following passages. ‘ I myself have been consulted of  
 ‘ late by so many, who profess themselves  
 ‘ at a loss how to breed their children, and  
 ‘ the early corruption of youth is now  
 ‘ become so general a complaint, that  
 ‘ he cannot be thought wholly imper-  
 ‘ tinent, who brings the consideration  
 ‘ of this matter on the stage, and offers  
 ‘ some thing, if it be but to excite others,

\* Mr. Locke.

‘ or afford matter of correction : for errors in education should be less indulged than any. These, like faults in the first concoction, that are never mended in the second, or third, carry their afterwards incorrigible taint with them, through all the parts and stations of life.

‘ The well-educating of their children is so much the duty and concern of parents, and the welfare and prosperity of the nation so much depend on it, that I would have every one lay it seriously to heart ; and after having well examined and distinguished what fancy, custom, or reason advises in the case, set his helping hand to promote every where that way of training up youth, with regard to their several conditions, which is the easiest, shortest, and likeliest to produce virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings ; though that most to be taken care of is the gentleman’s calling. For if those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order.’

In his treatise on education he says, ‘ I wish, that those who complain of the  
‘ great

‘ great decay of christian piety and virtue  
‘ every where, and of learning-acquired  
‘ improvements in the gentry of this gene-  
‘ ration, would consider how to retrieve  
‘ them in the next. This I am sure, that  
‘ if the foundation of it be not laid in the  
‘ education and principling of the youth,  
‘ all other endeavours will be vain. And  
‘ if the innocence, sobriety, and industry  
‘ of those who are coming up, be not  
‘ taken care of and preserved, it will be  
‘ ridiculous to expect, that those who are  
‘ to succeed next on the stage, should  
‘ abound in that virtue, ability, and learn-  
‘ ing, which has hitherto made England  
‘ considerable in the world.’

From these and many other passages to the same effect, it is easy to see what his opinion was of our method of training youth, and how necessary he judged an alteration to be. Let us therefore with candour and impartiality examine our system of education, as it now stands : I am much deceived if it will appear calculated to promote knowlege and virtue ; on the contrary I believe, it will be found to be the true source of all our follies,  
vices,

vices, ignorance and false taste. Should it prove so, this advantage will result from the enquiry, that in the course of it, proper remedies will suggest themselves as the errors appear, and upon a right application they cannot fail of effecting a cure.

## C H A P. II.

*Our present System of Education considered.*

WHEN a boy can read English with tolerable fluency, which is generally about the age of seven or eight years, he is put to school to learn Latin and Greek; where, seven years are employed in acquiring but a moderate skill in those languages. At the age of fifteen or thereabouts, he is removed to one of the universities, where he passes four years more in procuring a more competent knowledge of Greek and Latin, in learning the rudiments of logick, natural philosophy, astronomy, metaphysics, and the heathen morality. At the age of nineteen or twenty a degree in the arts is taken, and here ends the education of a gentleman.

C

When



When education is said to be finished, one would imagine that the person is qualified immediately to enter upon his part on the great stage of life; and yet it would be hard to say what single duty of society, or what single office as a citizen, he is qualified to discharge, or sustain, after his close application of so many years. It may be asked with Seneca, what fruits are to be expected, ‘ from a vain ostentation of the politer studies, and unavailing learning? Whose errors will they diminish? whose passions will they restrain? whom will they make more brave, more just, more liberal?’

The ill effects of this method are described by Milton in such nervous and concise terms, that I shall not stand in need of any apology with the reader, for presenting him with his observations upon this occasion, instead of my own.

‘ As for the usual method of teaching arts, I deem it to be an old error of universities, not yet well recovered from the scholastick grossness of barbarous ages, that instead of beginning with arts most easy, and those be such as are most obvious

ous to the sense, they present their young unmatriculated novices at first coming with the most intellectual abstractions of logick and metaphysics: so that they having but newly left those grammatical flats and shallows, where they stuck unreasonably, to learn a few words, with lamentable construction, and now on the sudden transported under another climate, to be tossed and turmoiled with their unballasted wits in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy, do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of learning, mocked and deluded all this while with ragged notions and babblements, while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge. Till poverty or youthful years call them importunately their several ways, and hasten them, with the sway of friends, either to an ambitious and mercenary, or ignorantly zealous divinity. Some allured to the trade of law, grounding their purposes, not on the prudent and heavenly contemplation of justice and equity (which was never taught them) but on the promising and pleasing thoughts of litigious

‘ terms, fat contentions, and flowing fees.  
‘ Others betake them to state affairs, with  
‘ souls so unprincipled in virtue, and true  
‘ generous breeding, that flattery and court  
‘ shifts, and tyrannous aphorisms appear  
‘ to them the highest points of wisdom;  
‘ instilling their barren hearts with a con-  
‘ scientious slavery, if, as I rather think,  
‘ it be not feigned. Others, lastly, of a  
‘ more delicious and airy spirit, retire  
‘ themselves, knowing no better, to the  
‘ enjoyments of ease and luxury, living  
‘ out their days in feast and jollity; which  
‘ indeed is the wisest and safest course of  
‘ all these, unless they were with more  
‘ integrity undertaken. And these are the  
‘ fruits of mispending our prime youth in  
‘ the schools and universities as we do,  
‘ either in learning meer words, or such  
‘ things chiefly as were better unlearnt.’

Mr. Locke, in delivering his sentiments  
on the same subject, perfectly agrees with  
Milton. In speaking of the education of  
a gentleman, he says, ‘ Since it cannot be  
‘ hoped he should have time and strength  
‘ to learn all things, most pains should be  
‘ taken about that which is most neces-  
‘ sary;

‘ fary ; and that principally looked after,  
 ‘ which will be of most and frequentest  
 ‘ use to him in the world.

‘ Seneca complains of the contrary prac-  
 ‘ tice in his time ; and yet the Burgerf-  
 ‘ dicius’s and the Scheiblers did not swarm  
 ‘ in those days, as they do now in these.  
 ‘ What would he have thought, if he had  
 ‘ lived now, when the tutors think it their  
 ‘ great business to fill the studies and heads  
 ‘ of their pupils with such authors as  
 ‘ these ? He would have had much more  
 ‘ reason to say, as he does, *Non vitæ sed*  
 ‘ *scholæ discimus*, We learn not to live,  
 ‘ but to dispute ; and our education fits us  
 ‘ rather for the universities, than the world.  
 ‘ But it is no wonder if those who make  
 ‘ the fashion, suit it to what they have,  
 ‘ and not what their pupils want. The  
 ‘ fashion being once established, who can  
 ‘ think it strange, that in this, as well as  
 ‘ in all other things, it should prevail ?  
 ‘ and that the greatest part of those, who  
 ‘ find their account in an easy submission  
 ‘ to it, should be ready to cry out he-  
 ‘ resy, when any one departs from it ?  
 ‘ ’Tis nevertheless matter of astonishment,



‘ that men of quality and parts, should  
‘ suffer themselves to be so far misled by  
‘ custom and implicit faith. Reason, if  
‘ consulted with, would advise, that their  
‘ children’s time should be spent in ac-  
‘ quiring what might be useful to them,  
‘ when they come to be men, rather than  
‘ to have their heads stuffed with a deal  
‘ of trash, a great part whereof they usual-  
‘ ly never do (’tis certain they never need  
‘ to) think on again as long as they live;  
‘ and so much of it as does stick to them,  
‘ they are only the worse for.

‘ This is so well known, that I appeal  
‘ to parents themselves, who have been at  
‘ cost to have their young heirs taught it,  
‘ whether it be not ridiculous for their  
‘ sons to have any tincture of that sort of  
‘ learning, when they come abroad into  
‘ the world; whether any appearance of  
‘ it would not lessen and disgrace them in  
‘ company? And that certainly must be  
‘ an admirable acquisition, and deserves  
‘ well to make a part in education, which  
‘ men are ashamed of, where they are  
‘ most concerned to shew their parts and  
‘ breeding.’

It

It is evident that both these great men thought our method of education was productive of evil, instead of good ; of mischief to mankind, instead of benefit. But amongst such as have received no ill taint from it, I believe it will be allowed by much the greater part, that they never find either profit or pleasure from it in the rest of their lives.

Upon their entrance into the world, a very short experience will convince them that they cannot apply what they have been learning to any useful purpose ; that to succeed in life they must enter upon entirely new studies, and that they must even have the double labour of unlearning many things which they before thought the perfection of human knowledge. Their Greek and Latin authors, their books of logick and metaphysics, &c. are laid aside, and in a few years all the traces of their early acquirements, of so many years pains and labour, are wholly obliterated. Is it not a lamentable thing to think that the prime of life hath thus been lost ; that a fertile soil hath thus been tilled, and manured, at great pains and cost, and such

seed sown as will never produce a valuable crop? Or is there reason to wonder, that the richness of the soil should waste itself in a luxuriance of weeds? Of the few, who, from a love to the arts in which they have been trained, would still keep them alive in their memories, and display their talents to the world, much the greater part serve only to increase the number of bad versifiers, miserable essay writers, and minute philosophers. The studious and contemplative minds indeed, may be furnished with matter to employ their leisure hours in innocent amusements, so that they may not be hurtful members of society, however useless; and this perhaps is the greatest benefit which the publick derives from it. The divine, the lawyer, and the physician, may convert these rudiments of science to their own advantage in their several professions; but the gentleman finding no immediate use for them, neglects, and of course soon forgets them. Thus the education of a gentleman, which is of all others the most important to the publick, is not at all provided for. Were it defective in all other arts and professions,

sions, tho' the grievance would be felt, it might be attended with no danger to the state. But gentlemen, born to be legislators, to be the bulwarks of our constitution ; to fill up posts which require wisdom, conduct, and the most improved abilities ; to animate and give motion to the whole body of the people ; to be an example and model to all ; the fountain of manners and source of principles ; if their education be defective, or bad, the whole constitution is affected by it : the disease has attacked the vitals, and must either be removed, or inevitable dissolution must follow.

To remedy this, two eminent physicians have prescribed very opposite courses. The first strikes at the root of the disease, which he would endeavour wholly to eradicate ; but, as it was before observed, his medicines are too powerful in their operation, for the strength of the patient's constitution. The other seems to think the case desperate, and has therefore only directed a course of lenitives, which may give ease to, and prolong the life of the patient, tho' not effect a cure. Milton's  
scheme



scheme seems better calculated for the times of the Spartan republick, and old Rome, than for the present age : however beautiful it may look in theory, it would be found impracticable in the trial ; or cou'd it be reduced to practice, it might in time change our form of government into a republick. Locke on the other side seems to despair of any effectual reformation in the publick established system ; he has therefore turned his whole thoughts towards private education. To this there are innumerable objections, but particularly in our constitution ; as that method is the best calculated for despotick states, and if it became general, wou'd be the surest means to establish arbitrary power. An evil of all others the most to be dreaded by a free people.

But surely between these two extremes, a medium may be found which will effectually answer all the ends proposed. Suppose instead of a total subversion, an attempt were made to correct the errors in the present system, to supply some defects, and extend and enlarge the whole : perhaps in pursuing this method, an easy  
and

and practicable plan might be struck out, which would exceed all that have been hitherto established in any part of the world.

The evils of our present mode of education do not so much arise from it's faults, as from it's defects ; from what it does, as from what it leaves undone ; from it's imperfections so far as it goes, as from it's stopping short at an improper time, when there is most occasion for it's influence. The end seems to be forgot, and the means are made the end. The rudiments of the arts are taught, as if they were desirable only for their own sakes ; but their uses for the purposes of life are never pointed out. Seneca in speaking upon this subject, asks, ' For what reason is it ' that we train our children up in the study ' of the arts and sciences ? It is not because ' they can inspire virtue, but because they ' prepare the mind for it's reception. Just ' as the rudiments of those, from which ' boys learn their first principles, do not ' directly teach the liberal arts, but prepare the way for their reception : so the ' liberal arts themselves do not directly ' lead

‘ lead the mind to virtue, but give it a  
‘ right disposition for it.’

Should a master, after having instructed his pupil in the rules of grammar, leave him to make his way thro’ the clafficks, as well as he could, without affifting him in his progress, and pointing out to him the use and application of those rules as he went along; could he ever with reason expect to find him a good scholar? And shall less care and pains be thought sufficient to make a good man? Is it easier, after having learned the rudiments of knowlege, and morality, for a man to guide himself right in the labyrinths of wisdom, and steer, unpiloted, a steady course of virtue, through the shoals, the rocks, the quicksands of life; and in a vessel without ballast, stand the swelling tides of corruption, and the storms of passion, than to understand a Greek or Roman author? And yet absurd as it may seem, such is our practice. At the very juncture, when the uses of all he has been reading ought to be pointed out to him with the utmost care and attention, in order to encourage him to go on in his  
course,

course, to reap the fruit of his toils; at that most critical time of life, when the passions begin to be too strong for reason, even when guarded to the utmost, is a young gentleman left to himself without a guide, without assistance, to follow the bent of his inclinations. Is it any wonder that they should lead him away from a dry and laborious course of study, in which he had ever proceeded with reluctance and disgust? Is it any wonder that they should immediately plunge him into a gulph of pleasure, from which he may never more emerge?

Is it not a fact, that after the age of twenty or thereabouts, a gentleman, tho' ever so desirous to finish his education, cannot find the means of doing it in England? And has not this reduced all parents, who wish to see their sons accomplished, to the necessity of sending them either to foreign academies, or to travel? Both which have been attended with the worst consequences. Those academies are in countries which differ widely from ours, both in religious and civil institutions; nor will it appear improbable, that their  
prin-



principles in both may be much corrupted, when it is considered what little knowledge of their own religion and government they carry with them abroad. It is no wonder, when we reflect on the places where they pass the first parts of their rational life, and the tutors from whom they receive the first knowledge of things instead of words, that so many should return confirmed republicans. And so many others, captivated by the charms, and outward appearances of the courts abroad, should entertain too favourable notions of monarchy. Their religion indeed will be in no great danger of being changed, as there is not much temptation to it; but as they carried but little abroad with them, there is a great hazard of their losing that little, and returning without any. And this perhaps may be found not the most unfruitful source of infidelity.

They who at that time of day are sent to travel, are yet in a more deplorable situation. \* To put them out of their parents' view, at a great distance, under a government, when they think themselves to be

\* Locke.

' too

• too much men to be governed by others,  
• and yet have not prudence and experi-  
• ence enough to govern themselves, what  
• is it but to expose them to all the great-  
• est dangers of their whole life, when  
• they have the least fence or guard against  
• them? 'Till that boiling boisterous part  
• of life comes in, it may be hoped the  
• tutor may have some authority: neither  
• the stubbornness of age, nor the tempta-  
• tion or example of others, can take him  
• from his tutor's conduct 'till fifteen or  
• sixteen: but then, when he begins to  
• consort himself with men, and thinks  
• himself one; when he comes to relish,  
• and pride himself in manly vices, and  
• thinks it a shame to be any longer under  
• the conduct and controul of another,  
• what can be hoped from even the most  
• careful and discreet governour, when  
• neither he has power to compel, nor his  
• pupil a disposition to be persuaded; but  
• on the contrary has the advice of warm  
• blood, and prevailing fashion, to hearken  
• to the temptations of his companions,  
• just as wise as himself, rather than to  
• the persuasions of his tutor, who is now  
• looked

‘ looked on as the enemy to his freedom?  
‘ And when is a man so likely to miscarry,  
‘ as when at the same time he is both  
‘ raw and unruly ?

‘ This is the season of all his life that  
‘ most requires the eye and authority of  
‘ his parents and friends to govern it.  
‘ The flexibleness of the former part of a  
‘ man’s age, not yet grown up to be head-  
‘ strong, makes it more governable and  
‘ safe ; and in the after-part, reason and  
‘ foresight begin a little to take place, and  
‘ mind a man of his safety and improve-  
‘ ment.’

If this picture be just, if this reasoning be right, shall we have any cause to wonder at the merchandise which those young adventurers bring back ? What indeed can be expected from them but an importation of all the follies, fopperies, vices and luxuries of the several countries thro’ which they have passed. These are to be found in the streets, and on the high-ways ; and to be picked up riding post ; but to collect valuable stores of knowlege, and to treasure up wise observations, demands the skill and experience of more advanced

years ; it requires much longer residence, close attention, and painful researches into places, far from the common road, and vulgar haunts of men.

It is evident that there can be no greater evil than the sending our youth abroad at so improper and dangerous a season. This evil arises from the sad alternative of being either obliged to do so, or of entering them too soon at home into the business of life. One or the other must be done as things are now circumstanced, or they must remain for some years in a state of idleness and inaction. Yet the remedy for this is not hard to be found. But before I speak to that point, it will be proper to take a more exact view of the previous part of education, as the finishing must in a great measure depend upon the preparation.

It has been said before, that the evils of our present system do not so much arise from it's faults, as from it's defects ; from what it does, as from what it omits to do. Indeed there is nothing taught in our schools and universities either improper or unbecoming a gentleman to know ; on

D

the



the contrary, whatever he learns there, if it be properly applied, he will find both useful and ornamental to him in whatever situation of life he may afterwards be placed. That these instructions seldom or never answer this end, is owing partly to the manner in which they are given, and partly to an entire omission or neglect of some studies which are essentially necessary to render the others useful, as well as ornamental.

In order to prove this, it will be necessary to lay down some principles relative to education, and then to try our system by those principles.

### C H A P. III.

*Of the principles upon which a system of education should be founded.*

\* ‘ **T**HE laws of education are the first impressions we receive; and as they prepare us for civil life, each particular family ought to be governed pursuant to the plan of the great family

\* Spirit of Laws.

\* which

‘ which comprehends them all. If the  
‘ people in general have a principle, their  
‘ constituent parts, that is, the several fa-  
‘ milies, will have one also.’

Hence it follows, that in every state it should be a fundamental maxim, first, that the education of youth should be particularly formed and adapted to the nature and end of it's government. Secondly, that the principle by which the whole community is supported, ought to be the most strongly inculcated on the minds of every individual. Where these rules are not observed, no state can flourish, or even subsist for any length of time. The best education upon any other principles may make good men, but it cannot make good citizens; it may make them virtuous and wise, but it cannot make them useful members of that particular society to which they belong.

Every kind of government hath it's nature, it's end, and it's principle. It's nature is it's particular constitution or construction to answer some end; it's end is that which is sought after by such constitution; and it's principle is the means of

compassing that end. From this view it is evident, that the principle is the most essential part ; is the soul of government, which puts it into motion, which gives it life and action. The best constitution in the world, and framed to the best end, without a principle, is nothing but a name, and without a right one, must necessarily be destroyed ; for if the principle be wrong, a different end will be pursued than what was the object of it's institution. It follows also, that the principle should be suited to the end, not only in it's nature, but in it's degree of power, and strength ; for so far as it falls short of the end, so far is the government weak and defective.

The natural order of enquiry therefore will be, whether we have a principle ; whether this principle be suited to the nature of our government ; whether it be of force enough to answer the end ; and whether this principle be sufficiently inculcated by education.

## C H A P. IV.

*Of the different principles of the different governments known in the world.*

ALL the different forms of government known in the world, may be reduced to three species; the republican, monarchical, and despotick. To these the celebrated Montesquieu has annexed three principles. To the republican, virtue; to the monarchical, honour; to the despotick, fear. In the first and the last of these he has incontestibly proved, that either these must be the principles, or the government could not subsist. But in what relates to the monarchical, he has not made use of that clearness and precision which appear so evidently in the rest of his work. As he seems to have formed his idea of monarchy intirely from that, under which he was born, so he has laid down rules in general for it, from the particular practice of that state. He hath accurately distinguished between the two republican forms, the aristocracy and democracy, and



the various manner in which the principle is to operate in those different forms ; nor was there less reason to distinguish between the different forms of monarchy, the less limited approaching to the despotick, and the more limited bordering upon the republican. It will not require much penetration to discover, that such a monarchy as that of England cannot subsist upon his principle of honour. To convince an Englishman of this, there needs only to present him with part of the description which he himself gives of the principle.

By the laws of honour he says, ‘ That  
‘ the actions of men are not judged as  
‘ good, but as shining ; not as just, but as  
‘ great ; not as reasonable, but extraor-  
‘ dinary.

‘ To this whimsical honour it is owing  
‘ that the virtues are only just what it  
‘ pleases, and as it pleases ; it adds rules  
‘ of it’s own invention to every thing  
‘ prescribed to us ; it extends or limits  
‘ our duties according to it’s own fan-  
‘ cy, whether they proceed from religion,  
‘ politicks, or morality. There is nothing  
‘ so strongly inculcated in monarchies, by  
‘ the

‘ the laws, by religion, and honour, as  
‘ submission to the prince’s will.’

What are the necessary consequences of such a principle? Montesquieu himself has described them in glaring colours in another place. ‘ Ambition joined to idleness, and baseness to pride; a desire of obtaining riches without labour, and an aversion to truth; flattery, treason, perfidy, violation of engagements, contempt of civil duties, fear of the prince’s virtue, hope from his weakness, but above all, a perpetual ridicule cast upon virtue.’

Far, far from Britain be for ever kept this blasting principle!

As the professed intention of this author, was to treat accurately of all the various governments known in the world, and their several principles, it is evident that he has been defective in the execution of one part of his design. For tho’ from his own descriptions, he found that our form of government would not come exactly under any of the heads into which he distinguished them; tho’ he has allotted a separate chapter to treat of our constitution, as a distinct species from any other; yet

he has not thought proper to say one syllable about the principle, by which it may be preserved, but has contented himself with foretelling the means by which it may be destroyed. Whether this was the effect of negligence or design, or whether he durst not deliver his sentiments freely upon that head, from the restraints of policy and religion, must be left to conjecture.

## C H A P. V.

*That our constitution can not be supported by any of these three principles, tho' they may be all useful to it.*

**A**S our constitution is made up of a due mixture of the three species of government, being partly monarchical, partly republican, and partly absolute, from the union of those two; it follows, that no particular principle belonging to any of those will be sufficient to answer its end. But all the three may be employed in it to advantage.

The bulk of the people should be bred up to fear the laws, which should be considered

sidered as vested with despotick power. The legislative or republican part should have virtue for it's object. And the principle of honour may be employed by the executive or royal authority with success. By honour I do not mean here that bastard kind described above, (which was substituted by princes really possessed of despotick power, tho' masked under the title of monarchy, in the room of fear, as a more useful and active instrument to promote their ambitious views) but that genuine and refined sort, arising from a love of fame, and the rewards attending it; which often stood in the place of virtue in republicks.

## C H A P. VI.

*The necessity of another principle to regulate these.*

**W**HEN three different principles act in one state, in which there is no subordination, or necessary dependance of the one on the other; as it would be extremely difficult to confine them within their



their due bounds, so as that no one should become predominant ; and as such a predominance of any one of these over the others, must necessarily bring about a change in the constitution ; it were to be wished, that a principle of superior force to any of these could be found out, whose office it should be to preserve the balance between the others, to restrain them within their due limits, and confine them to their proper objects. Nor have we far to seek for such a principle. It can be no other than RELIGION.

To the great power and energy of this principle, Montesquieu himself has borne testimony ; for though he has never mentioned it as a necessary one to any of the forms of government, which he treats of, yet he occasionally says in a part of his work, not professedly upon that point, that ‘ The principles of christianity  
‘ deeply engraved on the heart, would be  
‘ infinitely more powerful than the false  
‘ honour of monarchies, than the humane  
‘ virtues of republicks, or the servile fear  
‘ of despotick states.

Hence

Hence it is evident he thought that the principle of true religion was much stronger than the force of all the others together ; and consequently that a state founded upon this principle must be fixed upon the most solid and durable basis. Hence also we may trace the reason of his silence upon that head in treating of the British constitution ; for as he clearly saw that it could be supported by no other principle but that of religion, and that the religion must be suited to the nature of our government, he must of necessity have given the preference to it in it's reformed state ; and this would have been a point of too much danger for a subject of France, and a Roman catholick by profession, to meddle with. This conjecture appears the more probable, when we see that this important article seems accidentally and carelessly dropped in a chapter, whose title is, ' Another of Mr. Bayle's paradoxes.'

## C H A P. VII.

*Of the power and extent of this principle.*

AS the different parts of which our constitution is composed, of course introduced different principles, the same policy which pointed out the necessity of a head to govern the whole state, shewed also the necessity of a regulating principle; and the same analogy will discover to us, that the power of this principle over the others, should be of the same nature and extent, as the power of the monarch over the different members of which the state is composed. It should be rather coercive, than active; rather direct, than govern; restrain, than impel. Whilst it pretends to no more, it will give no umbrage to a free people; and the three principles of virtue, fear, and honour, may all be exercised with more force and advantage, under the guidance and influence of such a principle, as they will be confined within due bounds, and directed to proper ends. From all which it manifestly

## CHAP. VII. EDUCATION. 43

festly appears, that this principle above all others should be chiefly inculcated by education.

## CHAP. VIII.

### *Of the principle of virtue.*

**I**T is easy to see that virtue in point of order, dignity, and use, is the foremost of the three other principles. It is also evident, that it is the most suited to the nature of our government, in as much as that partakes more of the republican than any other form. If therefore we want to know how to cultivate this noble and necessary principle, let us look into the methods practised by those antient and wise republicks of Greece, and Rome, where it flourished in it's highest degree. This enquiry also may perhaps lead us into the best manner of propagating religion too ; for virtue and religion are nearly allied, they give and receive mutual aids, and the one naturally prepares the mind for the other.

## CHAP.



## CHAP. IX.

*The methods taken in antient education to promote and encourage virtue.*

THE great republicks of Athens and Rome, like us, had liberty for their object. Liberty could not exist without virtue, nor be preserved without wisdom. Knowledge of all human affairs joined with virtue, was necessary to the internal polity, order, and tranquillity of the state: fortitude, the result of virtue, joined with policy, was necessary to preserve it from external violence. Nor was the mere possession of wisdom and knowledge sufficient in their statesmen, no more than courage without skill in their citizens. As their councils were the result of publick debates; wisdom, and policy, to have their due effects, must be displayed and communicated to others; the wisest counsellor in such a state, without a power and facility of delivering his sentiments, could be of little use to the publick. Such communication could be made no other way

way than by language; a complete knowledge of that was therefore absolutely necessary. But as the mere communication alone might not always produce the effect of bringing others into the same way of thinking; it was necessary that this communication should be made in a clear and forcible manner, so as to enlighten the understanding, and to make strong impressions on the hearts of the hearers. To do this, it was necessary that their thoughts and words should be ranged in due order, and the whole delivered with proper tones and gestures. Or, in other words, the art of oratory was essential to those who spoke in publick. Hence we may trace the principles upon which their system of education was built. Their end was liberty; liberty could not subsist without virtue, nor be maintained without wisdom and knowledge; and wisdom and knowledge, unless communicated with force and perspicuity, were useless to the state. But as virtue is a painful renunciation of all selfish passions; and as wisdom and knowledge, with the art of persuasion, are the effects of laborious study, application, and

prac-

practice; it was necessary that men should be encouraged by rewards, and assisted by instruction in those difficult pursuits. Accordingly we find, that in the education of their youth, after having taken care to instil strongly the principle of virtue, their chief attention was to instruct them in the most accurate knowledge of their own language, and to train them from their childhood in the practice of oratory, as the sure means to preferment in the state.

## CHAP. X.

*The study of oratory necessary to us in every point where it was so to the antients.*

**T**HERE is not one point in which this art was necessary or useful to the antients, wherein it is not equally so to us. Nor was there any incitement to the study of it, either of pleasure, profit, or honour, which with us is not equally strong. That the uses are the same in all points common to us with them, may be seen by only looking over the following  
ele-

elegant and summary view of them drawn up by Cicero. †.

Nothing seems to me to be more truly excellent, than to be able by the powers of oratory to engage the attention of public assemblies, to win their good opinion, to drive their passions whither you like, and bring them back at pleasure. This art alone has ever flourished, and borne the greatest sway in all free states, especially in times of peace and tranquility. For what can so justly excite our admiration, as that one man of a million should either alone, or at least with but few others, be able to do that which nature seems to have put into the power of all men? What can give such pleasure both to our hearing and understanding, as a polite and elegant oration, filled with sentiments of wisdom, and expressions of dignity? What can be an instance of such real power and magnificence, as that popular commotions, the sacred opinions of judges, and the majesty of senates, should be swayed by the oratory of one single person.

† Cic. de Orat. lib. 1.



• Besides, what so noble, so generous,  
• so royal, as to relieve the suppliant, to  
• raise the afflicted, to be the dispenser of  
• safety, the deliverer from danger, and  
• the means of preserving it's members to a  
• community? What so necessary as to be  
• always prepared with arms, by which  
• you may defend yourself, set your ene-  
• mies at defiance, or take vengeance when  
• provoked? But farther, that we may  
• not always confine this point to the fo-  
• rum, the bench, the rostrum, or the se-  
• nate-house, what in the retirements of  
• private life can give more delight, or  
• more properly belong to civilized huma-  
• nity, than pleasant and polished discourse  
• free from all marks of rusticity? For in  
• this alone consists our chief pre-eminence  
• over brute-beasts, that we can converse  
• together, and by speech express the sen-  
• timents of our minds?

• Who then shall not think this an ob-  
• ject justly worth his admiration, and de-  
• serving his severest labours, to be able  
• in that very circumstance by which men  
• excel other animals, to excel all other  
• men?

We

We as well as they have councils, senates, and assemblies of the people [by their representatives] where matters of as great moment are deliberated, debated on, and concluded ; where eloquence and oratory have as ample fields in which they may display themselves, and where the † rewards and honours paid to them are equal. Nor is oratory less necessary to us at the bar than it was to them, tho' it's mode may be somewhat altered by the difference of our constitution, and it's powers confined in narrower limits.

To expatiate upon these topicks would be only loss of time, as the point must be obvious to the most common discernment.

† If we look into the history of England since the reformation, we shall find that most persons have made their way to the head of affairs, and got into the highest employments, not by birth or fortune, but by being what is commonly called good speakers.

## CHAP. XI.

*That there is one point in which the study of oratory is essentially necessary to us, but was not at all so to the antients.*

THE article I mean is of the utmost importance to us; it is the basis of our constitution, and pillar of our state. It is that which gives our's the greatest advantage over all other forms of government, by furnishing it with the most suitable means to answer it's end: it is in short that regulating principle, which I have before spoken of, so essentially necessary to the preservation of our constitution, I mean Religion. As the religion of the antients consisted chiefly in rites and ceremonies, it could derive no assistance from oratory; but there is not the smallest branch of ours which can be well executed without skill in speaking; and the more important parts calculated to answer the great ends, evidently require the whole oratorical powers. But before I enlarge upon the means by which it may be preserved, it will

will not be improper in these days, wherein religion is fallen into such contempt, to prove the absolute necessity of the principle itself to the preservation of the state. In order to do this I shall endeavour, first, to shew, that tho' virtue might have been a sufficient principle to have supported the antient republicks, yet that it could not be sufficient to support our form of government, notwithstanding it be equally necessary to it. Secondly, that the cause of the failure and decay of the principle of virtue in those states, was, that the means to support it were inadequate; and that those means, or any indeed of human invention, must be of infinitely less efficacy with us than with them. Thirdly, that from the nature of our situation, and the peculiarity of our circumstances, nothing could possibly make us, or continue us to be a great and flourishing people, but an immediate revelation of the divine will, and a perfect obedience paid on our part to that will so revealed. Fourthly, that the means made use of by the antients to support their principle of virtue, tho' found insufficient and inadequate to that



end, yet would be found forcible enough, and abundantly effectual to preserve our principle of religion.

## C H A P. XII.

*Though virtue might have been a sufficient principle to have supported the antient republicks, yet it would not be sufficient to support our form of government, notwithstanding it be equally necessary to it.*

**W**Hoever hath a mind to be convinced of the absolute necessity of virtue to a republican form of government, insomuch that it cannot possibly subsist without it, may see the point undeniably proved by Montesquieu in his Spirit of laws. He will also find it evidently shewn, that liberty cannot exist without virtue; whence he may deduce the necessity of it also to our constitution. That it was a sufficient principle to answer all the ends of a republican state, the experience of ages has fully shewn. For all the great republicks were strong and flourished whilst that principle remained in it's vigour; as that  
grew

grew weak, they declined ; and with the total corruption of it, were destroyed. So that their ruin was not occasioned by any defect in the principle itself, but by the corruption of it, thro' the neglect or want of proper means to support it. These were found too weak to oppose luxury, which like a mighty torrent always overturned and carried all before it. By that Athens fell ; by that Rome perished.

— *Scævior armis*

*Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.*

In the Spartan commonwealth the mighty power of this principle of virtue was shewn in it's greatest height. For as it's deadliest foe, luxury, had been banished by the institutions of Lycurgus, it lasted with little or no alteration for more than 700 years. And at the time when there seemed to be a general combination against the freedom of mankind ; when luxury and tyranny went hand in hand over the face of the earth ; in that little state the sacred flame of liberty was still preserved : there she had still an asylum, and supported by virtue, seemed to defy the

united endeavours of mankind. Tho' often conquered, tho' often thrown to earth, by the superior force of their antagonists, yet like Antæus they arose again fresh and vigorous thro' the divine energy of their principle. Till their enemies despairing of ever being able to subdue their state whilst their virtue remained, found it necessary to pave the way for luxury by altering the institutions of Lycurgus, and changing their mode of education. This soon effected what the force of arms could never have done, and in a short time they were no longer a people.

However powerful this principle may be, however equal to answer all the ends of republican governments, it would be far from being sufficient to our purpose. From the nature of their institution, that must be their sole ruling principle; nor could it have any other to contend with, except what arose from the ambition of private men. It had no occasion for controul or restraint, since even it's excess could not be hurtful to the state.

But in the very groundwork of our constitution are sown the seeds of other prin-

principles. A monarch has not necessarily virtue for his object; the increase of his power may perhaps be a more natural aim. A nobility may have in view the enlargement of their property, and addition to their honours; and the increase of kingly power may by them be considered as the shortest road to these. To guard against their encroachments will be the business of virtue in the representatives of the people. But then this virtue must be confined within due bounds; for should it run into excess, it would as necessarily overturn the constitution as successful ambition in the others †. As in the one case our state would become wholly monarchical, so in the other it must of course be republican. Hence we may deduce the necessity of a principle superior to virtue, to regulate its motions, and confine it within proper limits. As man is to be controuled by man, so must principle by principle. For should we entrust the power of regulating or establishing principles to man, we at the same time give him power to modify them as he pleases;

† Vide reign of Charles I.



or to destroy them; and consequently furnish him with the means of tyrannizing.

## C H A P. XIII.

*That the cause of the failure and decay of the principle in those, was, that the means to support it were inadequate; and that those means, or indeed any of human invention, must be of infinitely less efficacy with us than with them.*

**T**HE means used by the antients to support virtue were education, oratory, and reward. By the first, proper and early notions of it were instilled before the mind was capable of judging. By the second, those notions were confirmed and established in the most forcible manner, which at once informed the understanding, and wrought upon the passions of mankind. By the last, men were allured and excited to reduce these notions to practice, both for their own benefit and that of society. As the last therefore was the great mover to action, it is evident, that  
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the efficacy of the former depended upon that. Whilst therefore reward was the necessary attendant on virtue, virtue of course was the chief object of education, and the chief point inculcated by oratory; but should reward change its object, and should vice lead to it instead of virtue, it is easy to see, that there would be a change in the road also.

Whilst republicks preserved their principle, virtue was necessarily the first object in education. Oratory, as the means of displaying virtue in its brightest colours, and imprinting it strongly on the minds of others, was of course studied, and rewards were the natural result of virtue and improved talents. For the whole power of reward lying in the people, whilst they were taught to believe, that the good and safety of each individual, depended upon the good and safety of the whole; they naturally, to the best of their judgments, conferred rewards on the most deserving, on such as were best able to support the republick. But, when their principle was corrupted, when luxury destroyed publick spirit, and favoured selfish gratifications,

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rewards were then distributed, not from views of publick good, but to answer private ends; the most corrupt men were chosen into places of power by corrupt voters; the means to thrive in the world were the ends sought after by education; and oratory was prostituted to answer the same purposes. But in our constitution, as the power of reward lies principally in the monarch, and his ministers, it is evident enough that they can give what bias they please to education. If their view be to extend their power, they will hardly suffer virtue to be it's object, nor will they care to have the youth exercised and made skilful in the use of so dangerous a weapon as oratory. From the very nature of our government indeed, the incitements to virtue cannot be so great as in republicks, There the field is open to all candidates, and the spirits of a man are supported, and animated in his fatiguing pursuits, by the moral certainty of the success which will attend his labours. Whereas with us the avenues are barred to many of perhaps the best talents, and brightest accomplishments; and the reward depending upon  
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CHAP. XIII. EDUCATION. 61

the will and pleasure of one or a few, who may not be either the most skilful, or uncorrupt, industry of course flags, and merit drops it's wing.

We should have but few artists finish their pieces with care and exactness, whose value was to be settled by the throwing of dice, by the decision of corrupt, or the caprice of ignorant judges.

Hence it is manifest that the means of supporting virtue are much weaker with us than with the antients; if therefore it be proved that the causes of it's destruction are much stronger with us than with them, how absurd must it appear to think of establishing that as our principle, which it is impossible for us to support.

The great cause of the destruction of virtue amongst the antients, was luxury; but it was not the native growth of their soil. It was transplanted from other climes, was a long time before it grew to any height, and might easily have been checked and kept low. It is true, at different times, from different conquests, sudden torrents of wealth poured in upon them, which filled the channels of luxury,  
and



and threatened danger to the land : but it required only a little resolution and steadiness to oppose their first violence, and their force would soon spend itself. Sumptuary laws, and the office of censor properly executed, were sufficient to guard the state from any very dangerous consequences, had it not been for the ambition of private men, whose interest it was to propagate corruption. But when we take a view of the situation of our country, that it is an island, that it must of course owe its splendor and power intirely to commerce, not to conquest ; that commerce produces wealth, and wealth of necessity introduces luxury ; we see, that with the seeds of our constitution are sown the seeds of it's corruption ; that both must grow up together, and unless proper care be taken the weeds must choak the grain. Wealth flows not in upon us by sudden gushes, and mountainy floods after rain or showers ; it has an inexhaustible source, from which flows a regular constant river, that grows wider and deeper as it advances. But as it has no boundless ocean to lose itself in ; as it terminates in the central

pool of luxury, the whole land must in time be deluged, if constant care be not taken to prevent it.

The Dutch have not more cause to be watchful over their dykes, as they see the sea gaining upon them, than we have to guard our bulwarks against the increasing tide of corruption. Luxury is not only arrived at a greater pitch, and become more general than it formerly was, but it must daily receive new additions from our connections with the eastern and western Indies. The power of our enemy hath been much increased, which hath rendered it's attacks more formidable, and hard to be resisted. Not greater additional force hath been given to military engines by the invention of gunpowder, than to the assaults of luxury, by our commercial discoveries. And what bulwarks have we to guard us, what weapons to defend us against it's attacks? Monarchs, and favourers of monarchy, will hardly promote sumptuary laws, or establish the office of censor. In this respect our constitution is as naked and void of strong holds, and fortified places, as our country, when an enemy has

has once got footing in it. In both cases there is no other resource but in the virtue and valour of the people.

If then the antients were not able to support virtue, when their means were so much greater, against the attacks of luxury when it's force was so much less; how shall we hope to do it, when the means to support virtue are so much less, and the force of luxury so much increased?

Perhaps it may be said, that tho' virtue be lost, vice may be restrained, and that the power of the laws, and punishments, may be sufficient to check it's progress. Suppose this were granted, yet it must necessarily be at the expence of our liberty. The principle of despotick government is fear, and the means to support that principle are punishments. The more therefore we establish that principle, and the more we rely upon those means, the nearer do we approach to a state of slavery. Hear what Montesquieu says upon this subject.

• It is a perpetual remark of the Chinese  
• authors, that the more the punishments  
• of criminals were increased, in their empire,  
• the nearer they were to a revolution.

tion. This is because punishments were augmented in proportion as the public morals were corrupted.

It would be an easy matter to prove, that in all, or almost all the governments of Europe, punishments have increased or diminished in proportion as those governments favoured or discouraged liberty\*.

In

\* Spirit of Laws, vol. i. b. vi. ch. 9.

In proportion as luxury gains ground in a republick, the minds of the people are turned towards their particular interests. Those who are allowed only what is necessary, have nothing to wish for but their own and their country's glory; but a soul depraved by luxury has many other desires, and soon becomes an enemy to the laws that confine it.

No sooner were the Romans corrupted, than their desires became boundless and immense.

When the whole world, impelled by the force of a general corruption, is immersed in voluptuousness, what must then become of virtue?

Spirit of Laws, vol. i. b. vii. ch. 2.

When virtue is banished, ambition invades the hearts of those who are disposed to receive it, and avarice possesses the whole community. The desires now change their objects; what they were fond of before becomes indifferent; they were free, while under the restraint of laws, they will now be free to act against law; and as every citizen is like a slave escaped from his master's house, what was a maxim of equity they call rigour; what was a rule of action, they call constraint; and to precaution, they give the name of fear. Frugality, and not the thirst of gain, now passes for avarice. Formerly the wealth of individuals constituted the publick treasure;

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but



In another place he says ; \* ‘ Men must  
 ‘ not be led by excess of violence ; we  
 ‘ ought to make a prudent use of the  
 ‘ means which nature has given us to con-  
 ‘ duct them. If we enquire into the cause  
 ‘ of all human corruptions, we shall find  
 ‘ that they proceed from the impunity of  
 ‘ crimes, and not from the moderation  
 ‘ of punishments.’

It will follow therefore, † ‘ that in mo-  
 ‘ derate governments a good legislator is  
 ‘ less bent upon punishing, than prevent-  
 ‘ ing crimes ; he is more attentive to in-  
 ‘ spire good morals, than to inflict punish-  
 ‘ ments.’

‡ ‘ But it often happens that a legislator  
 ‘ desirous of reforming an evil, thinks of  
 ‘ nothing but of this reformation ; his eyes  
 ‘ are open only to this object, and shut to  
 ‘ its inconveniencies. When the evil is  
 ‘ redressed, there is nothing seen but the  
 ‘ severity of the legislator ; yet there will

but now the publick treasure is become the patrimony of  
 private persons. The members of the commonwealth  
 riot on the publick spoils, and it's strength is only the  
 power of some citizens, and the licentiousness of the  
 whole community.

\* Book vi. ch. 12. † Ch. 9. ‡ Ch. 12.

‘ remain an evil in the state that has sprung  
‘ from this severity ; the minds of the  
‘ people are corrupted, and become ha-  
‘ bituated to despotick power.’

It would therefore be but a bad omen if we saw the legislature relying wholly upon punishments for the preservation of morals ; for either the means would not be effectual, or if effectual, we must soon change our freedom for slavery. One of the two following cases mentioned by Montesquieu must inevitably be our lot.

† ‘ There are two sorts of corruption ; one,  
‘ when the people do not observe the  
‘ laws ; the other, when they are cor-  
‘ rupted by the laws ; an incurable evil,  
‘ because it is in the very remedy itself.’

The antients knew the force and necessity of the principle of fear, but they also knew how to make a right use of it. As only the few were to be allured to virtue by reward, the bulk of the people could be kept from vice by nothing but punishment. But as punishment acts by fear, and the direct tendency of fear is to depress the spirits, and check that nobility

† Ch. 12.

of soul which alone could support a free republick, they used it with a sparing hand. Penal laws with them were few, and their punishments of the lightest kind. But tho' the fear of man, or any thing belonging to him, or his institutions, might debase man; yet the fear of the gods, as superior beings, and a reverence to their commands, could be no degradation to human nature. Hence we see that the direct intent of their laws was to promote virtue, and to engage the obedience of their citizens to them by reward; whilst vice was discouraged by a dread of punishment from the gods, and an hatred to it inculcated chiefly by the laws of religion. Thus had they the full use of this principle without any of it's ill effects. Religious awe depresses not the soul, on the contrary it invigorates it in the cause of virtue; and the operation of fear must be infinitely more powerful, when it's object is a superior being, the effects of whose displeasure are unavoidable by us, than when it's object is mere man, or his laws, which force may resist, or cunning may evade. Accordingly we find that a  
greater

greater purity of morals was preserved, and fewer crimes committed in those states, under the influence of this religious sense, than in any of those countries which depended upon the severity of their laws, and the rigour of their punishments.

But as their religion was merely of human institution, and it's whole force depended upon the belief of the contrary, it was no difficult matter to overturn it. The gross absurdities with which it was filled, were sufficient to destroy it's credibility, whenever the eyes of the people were opened. It did not require much pains to persuade men that a thing was false, which they wished to be so: or to free them from the fetters of prejudice, when their passions were too strong for restraint. As they had not any just notions of a future state, the observation of the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life would soon destroy all trust in providence, and make man alone the object of their hopes and fears; and when the leaders who knew it to be nothing but a political scheme, found it their interest to pull off the mask, and to act against it's



precepts, their example was soon followed by the multitude. No great labour was required to make them pull down altars raised to men, and to break in pieces like potters clay, and trample under foot, the gods of their own making. Thus virtue, morals, and religion, were all borne away by the irresistible tide of corruption.

## C H A P. XIV.

*That from the nature of our situation and the peculiarity of our circumstances, nothing could possibly make us, or continue us a great and flourishing people, but an immediate revelation from God.*

**I**T will be granted, that without liberty we cannot either be a great or a flourishing people. It will be granted, that liberty cannot subsist without virtue; and it has been proved by the experience of all ages, and countries, that virtue is necessarily destroyed by luxury. It has been shewn that all human means to preserve virtue, are weaker and fewer with us; and the causes which introduce and promote luxury, more certain and more powerful, both

in degree and number, than in any other free country. It will therefore necessarily follow, that we have less probability of preserving our liberty, by any means hitherto practised, and that its duration must of course be shorter than in any of those states where it once flourished, and was afterwards destroyed. When it is considered that liberty, and consequently virtue, are absolutely necessary to our well-being; and that riches, and consequently luxury, must unavoidably flow in upon us from the nature of our situation; that these two are utterly incompatible, and that the one must necessarily destroy the other; that either to get rid of our luxury we must part with our wealth, without which we can not be a flourishing people, or defend ourselves against the power of our enemies; or if our luxury remains, we must part with our virtue, and consequently our liberty, which would render us still less flourishing, and less powerful; the preservation of such a state seems to be beyond the power of all human means, and can be effected by nothing but divine interposition.

In a state so circumstanced nothing can possibly engage men in the painful and self-denying practice of virtue, in spite of the constant temptations in their way, but the certainty of a suitable reward; and nothing can deter them from vice, when stimulated and inflamed by passions, but unavoidable punishments adequate to their crimes. This can not be on earth, where man is to be the judge; it must therefore be in a future state, and the office belong to God alone, the searcher of hearts. But as the light of nature and unassisted reason, could never discover this with a sufficient degree of certainty to make it a principle of action, it was necessary that it should come to us by an immediate revelation from God. To give this force, it was not sufficient to know that there would be a future state, in which rewards and punishments would be distributed; it was necessary also that a system of laws should be promulged for our conduct in life, the observance or breach of which should entitle us to reward, or subject us to punishment. To enforce the observation of these laws,  
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it was also necessary that they should be believed to come from God himself.

I shall not attempt to enter upon so beaten a topick as the proof of the authenticity of our holy religion. This has employed the pens of many who have never been excelled in clearness of understanding, solidity of judgment, and depth of penetration; so that probably nothing new can be said upon that head. I shall content myself with shewing, that if ever a divine revelation was necessary to man, it was more particularly so to the British nation, than to any other upon earth: that it was impossible, without such a revelation, we should ever be, or at least continue to be, a great and flourishing people: and that the system now nominally established amongst us as the revealed will of God, were it really believed to be such universally, and accordingly practised, would raise us above all other nations that either do, or ever did exist upon earth; and preserve us unalterably such to the end of time, provided that system continued to retain it's due influence.

It



It was a maxim of Tully's, ' That it is  
' impossible for those who have no belief  
' of the immortality of the soul, or a fu-  
' ture state of rewards and punishments;  
' to sacrifice their particular interests and  
' passions to the publick good, or to have  
' a generous concern for posterity.' And  
the most enlightened of the heathens,  
the almost inspired Plato, has delivered  
it as his opinion, that ' concerning those  
' great duties which men's appetites and  
' passions render difficult, it should seem  
' rather the work of God to provide, than  
' of human legislators, if it were possible  
' to hope for a system of laws framed and  
' promulged by God himself.'

Here we see how necessary the wisest  
of the heathens judged such a revelation  
to be, could it have been hoped for.  
And if he thought so in his days, how  
much more necessary ought we to think  
it in the present times? In the antient  
free states, there arose from the nature  
of their constitution, a principle sufficient  
to preserve them. God had done his part  
by them; he had furnished them with  
proper means for their security, and if  
they

they suffered them to fail in their hands, it was their fault. But whoever examines the constitution of Great Britain, will find that from it's nature it had no principle; and considering the discordant and jarring parts of which it is composed, it must necessarily fall to pieces in a short time, unless they were cemented by religion. To them therefore such a revelation was more absolutely necessary than to any other nation.

When it is considered that Great Britain is particularly circumstanced in regard to any other country that ever made a figure in the world; and that in order to be conspicuous, she must have other principles than what the wit of man has ever yet discovered, would it not be a strong presumptive proof in favour of their divine original, should such principles be provided for her without her seeking, at a time when she had most occasion for them? Her flourishing state was to arise from commerce; for this the wonderful invention of the compass made way, by which those amazing discoveries of new worlds on this globe were made.

By

By commerce, riches; and by riches, luxury must necessarily be introduced, against which no state was ever able to stand; and she, from the nature of her constitution, was less able than any. When it is considered, that previous to the great opening of commerce, a system of laws was provided for her, and promulgated over the whole nation, which alone was able to prevent the destruction attendant on luxury; that this system was not framed by any legislator of her own country, (as in all other cases) not cultivated and established by the wisdom or design of man, in times of knowledge, but in the days of ignorance, when our forefathers knew not it's particular use and fitness to their country; that it was not brought in by the hand of power, and supported by authority, but made it's way against the passions, prejudices, interests, and violence of mankind; that a reformation was begun of the abuses which had crept into this system, at a most critical time, and that not from any views to public utility, but from agents who were doing good in the dark; when it is  
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considered, that Great Britain by these means, in her very infancy, and just emerging out of darkness, found herself in possession of a wiser and better system of moral laws, than the labour of centuries in the most polished and intelligent nations ever produced ; that this system was not only calculated in the most exact manner for all the purposes of society in general, but peculiarly adapted to the particular circumstances of this country above all others ; when all these things are considered, sure there is not any one of the least reflection who must not necessarily see the hand of God throughout.

That the gospel system is the best calculated for the universal good of mankind, and all the uses of society, is a confession extorted even from the mouths of it's greatest enemies and opposers. That it is peculiarly adapted to our country and constitution, may at once be seen by any one who will take a view of both. That one principle chiefly inculcated by it was absolutely necessary to a people, whose flourishing state must be owing to commerce, I mean that enlarged principle of uni-



universal benevolence, which extending the narrow bounds of our affections beyond the little spot in which we casually first drew air, teaches us to look on the whole world as our country, and to love all mankind as our brethren; that such a principle, I say, must be of the utmost use and benefit to a commercial people, can not be denied. If all this be so, if not only the well-being, but the very being of our state depends upon the establishment of this system as our principle, and the establishment depends upon the belief of it's divine institution, is it our business to be too curiously inquisitive into it's original? Shall we not embrace the blessings which it brings, because we can not be certain of the hand from which they come? Would not a man be reckoned an idiot who acted so in the common affairs of life? It is so much, so absolutely our interest to believe it, that far from requiring demonstration to support it, nothing but the most absolute demonstration of the contrary ought to have the least weight with us. Did it contain any thing indeed prejudicial to the interests of society  
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#### CHAP. XIV. EDUCATION. 79

in general, or the welfare of it's members in particular, it would then be the business of all men to examine narrowly into its foundation, and it would be their duty to refuse obedience to it, unless it were unquestionably proved to come from God himself. But if it be allowed to be perfectly calculated for the good of the whole, as well as of every individual, as it would be the highest absurdity in us to refuse obedience to it without such proof, so it would be inconsistent with the wisdom of that divine nature which does nothing in vain, to furnish us with such proof as we should unreasonably require. Demonstration is superfluous, where probability is sufficient. What shall we say then to a set of men who allow the utility of the system, and yet do their utmost to destroy it's effect? Are they not enemies to society, do they not declare themselves such in the very act, who attempt to destroy the force of any principle apparently for the good of society? Are they not enemies to their country who would endeavour to loosen and shake the basis of it's constitution? Suppose it were in their  
power

power to give absolute demonstration (impossible indeed) that this religion came not from God, and by that means they should destroy the effect of the only principle by which the noblest constitution upon earth could be supported, what reward should these men expect? Should it not be opposite to what the preservers of their country have met with? Should not a pillar of infamy be erected to their memories? It might be doubted whether there could be any such men upon earth, were there not too many glaring proofs of it. The transcendent excellence of our holy religion has necessarily raised enemies to it. For as this noble system is admirably framed for the publick benefit, as well as the real good of every member, so is it directly opposite to the sensual gratifications and selfish views of individuals. Whilst therefore there are sensualists or weak selfish men, who mistake their true interest in the world, they will necessarily be it's opposers and enemies. Whatever specious pretext of liberty or virtue they may shew forth, selfishness is at the bottom. Watch their actions, and you will find

find them selfish. Whoever endeavours to loosen or break the bonds of society, in that instance shews that he prefers his individual self to the whole. Whoever contends for a liberty to act against the good of society, wants to put it in practice. Whoever complains of restraints upon natural appetites, wants to gratify those appetites. Pity it is that such men were not banished together to some desolate island, where they would soon be convinced by experience, of the necessity of having recourse to those very principles, from the motive of self-preservation, which in a social state, from a motive of self-gratification, they would have destroyed.

## C H A P. XV.

*Of the means by which the principle of religion may be supported, and the chief cause of it's decay shewn to arise from a material defect in education.*

**H**AVING shewn the necessity of the principle, it will be now proper to consider the means by which it may be supported, in it's due vigour. If it be said that this principle coming from God, must



of necessity make it's way in spite of all opposition on the part of man, and fulfil the ends of it's institution, the argument is fallacious. \* ' We are not to think, it ' is the work of God, and therefore not to ' be seconded by human care. Far other- ' wise ; for that very reason it claims our ' utmost care and diligence, it being the ' indispensable duty of all good men, ' throughout the whole course of their ' lives, to cooperate with the designs of ' providence. In religion, as in nature, ' God doth somewhat, and somewhat is to ' be done on the part of man. He causes ' the earth to bring forth materials for food ' and raiment, but human industry must ' improve, prepare, and properly apply ' both the one and the other, or mankind ' may perish with cold and hunger. And ' according to this same analogy, the prin- ' ciples of piety and religion, the things ' that belong to our salvation, although ' originally and primarily the work of ' God, yet require the protection of human ' government, as well as the furtherance ' and aid of all wise and good men.

\* Bishop of Cloyne.

God

God has revealed his will, and supplied the means to put it in execution; this is all that is to be hoped for on his part, to make a proper use of those means is the business of man. The moral precepts of christianity are so clear, that to be assented to, they need only be known. But knowledge without practice is useless. To persuade men to practise them, it is necessary that they should be forcibly inculcated, and frequent impressions made till practice ripens into habit. Even then those impressions can not be too often repeated, considering the frailty of human nature, for fear of a relapse. How admirably has our constitution taken care of this, in establishing an order of men supported by the publick, whose whole business it is weekly and daily to attend to this point. But the end of their institution can never be answered without power of speaking, and skill in oratory. Deprived of these the pulpit is at best useless, and the preacher a cypher. We might as reasonably expect that red coats, and muskets, without ammunition, or military discipline in soldiers, should preserve our country against the

invasion of an enemy, as that black gowns, and bands, and empty forms, or the

‘ Shooting calm words folded up in smoke’ \*

should be sufficient weapons in the hands of the clergy, to support the church against the attacks of vice and infidelity.

There are two ways by which the purity of religion, and it's precepts, may be defended ; by speaking, and by writing. The first is the immediate gift of God, who has annexed to it (when cultivated by man) powers almost miraculous, and an energy nearly divine. He has given to it tones to charm the ear, and penetrate the heart ; he has joined to it action, and looks, to move the inmost soul. By that, attention is kept up without pain, and conviction carried to the mind with delight. Persuasion is ever it's attendant, and the passions own it for a master. Great as is the force of its powers, so unbounded is their extent. All mankind are capable of it's impressions, the ignorant as well as the wise, the illiterate as well as the learned.

\* Shakespear's king John.

The second is the invention of man, a mere work of art, and therefore can contain no natural power. It's use is to give stability to sound, and permanence to thought. To preserve words that otherwise might perish as they are spoke; and to arrest ideas that might vanish as they rise in the mind. To assist the memory in treasuring these up; and to convey knowlege at distance thro' the eye, where it could find no entrance by the ear.

The vast superiority of the former over the latter is obvious enough from this view. There is not one power belonging to the latter, which the former, wherever it's influence can be exerted, does not possess in a more eminent degree. Whereas there are many powers belonging to the former, in which the latter has no share. That works by the whole force of artificial as well as natural means; this by artificial means only. None but the learned can receive benefit from the one; all mankind from the other. As the bulk of the people are illiterate, it's publick utility therefore must be much greater. The one should be considered as a handmaid



to the other, and employed chiefly in such offices as she can not do in her own person.

Should therefore our clergy desert the strong natural means given by God himself to support religion, and morality; means, the absolute necessity of which is daily pointed out to them in every act of office; should they have recourse to the weak, the artificial, the mere inventions of man, is it strange that their holy cause should suffer? In attempting to support it only by polemical writings, have they not quitted their proper arms, and fastnesses, to engage the enemy at their own weapons, and upon their own ground? By the one, they might command the passions of mankind, and gain them intirely to their side. In the other, the passions, prejudices, and temporal interests of men, were too much against them, to expect that they should be impartial judges of what was coolly offered to their understanding. It is no easy matter to persuade men to employ much labour and pains to come at the truth of a thing, which they wish to be false; and a right conclusion

clusion from long deductions of reasoning, is difficult to be made even by unbiaſſed minds, but is hardly ever to be expected from ſuch as are prejudiced, unleſs conviction like light be forced upon them. In the former, the clergy had the field intirely to themſelves, no antagoniſt could riſe up after them to eraze whatever impreſſions their oratory had made. In the latter, they had as many adverſaries as pleaſed to take the field, ſkilled in all the weapons of logick, and armed with the full force of ridicule; which was but too likely to make ſtrong impreſſions upon minds that were before prepoſſeſſed againſt them, and their doctrines. How was it poſſible therefore, that they ſhould not loſe their cauſe, when brought before prejudiced judges? Or how could they expect that truth ſhould prevail, when ridicule, not reaſon, was ſet up to be it's teſt?

By this method, our divines have not only changed their celeftial armour made by God himſelf, of proof againſt all human force, for ſuch as was made by the weak hands of imperfect man; their weapons tempered in pure ætherial fire, for

those of brittle steel; they have also swerved from the example, and deserted the method pointed out by their great founder. It was by preaching, not writing, that our blessed Saviour propagated his doctrines. His example was followed by the apostles, who committed nothing to writing but plain matters of fact, and unadorned precepts. It was the gift of the tongues, not the pen, which was miraculously bestowed on the apostles; and it is to be supposed when they addressed the different nations in their different languages, that they did it with force and energy. The mere utterance of the sounds whereof their language was composed, could have but little effect, except the wonder it might occasion, how illiterate men should be able to acquire that art; but when each found himself addressed not only in the words, but in the spirit of their several languages; their expressions enforced by proper tones and cadence; and the whole delivered with such energy as could alone penetrate the heart, they at once saw and felt, that this could be only the work of God; nor could  
such

such multitudes of converts have been made in one day by any other means. In what sort of sounds, with what kind of gesture, must St. Paul have spoke, when Felix trembled? With what power of oratory must he have addressed the Athenians, when that polished people looked upon him with such admiration? And what must have been the force of his eloquence when the men of Lystra called him Mercury, and would have paid him divine honours?

And indeed when the amazing strength, and almost boundless power of oratory is considered, no other instrument could be found of sufficient force, and suitable dignity, to support the important and glorious cause of religion. If the eloquence of the antients was irresistible upon common topicks, where only the temporal interests of men were concerned, how much more extensive must it's power be, where their eternal welfare is it's subject? If the mere charms of oratory alone, independent of the subject, could have such effects; if the attention of all Greece was taken up by a dispute between two orators,

about



about a trifling reward, an honorary crown; how much more interested must each hearer be in a cause, whose subject is the highest reward to himself, that can be conceived by man, and a never-fading crown of glory, of which he can not be deprived? If Cicero in pleading the cause of a criminal, could make the blood forsake the cheeks of a Cæsar, and unnerve his arm; why might not the greatest and mightiest amongst us be made to tremble like Felix, could our preachers, like St. Paul, reason with force and energy, upon righteousness and judgment to come? There can be no doubt, but that an equal degree of skill in that art would have much nobler effects amongst us, and be possessed of a much more extensive power, than amongst the antients, as it's subject would be so much more important, and the field in which it should display itself so much enlarged. It must also have a greater command over the passions, as the object of our hopes and fears is increased. Whoever doubts of the truth of this, may soon be convinced, by examining into the wonderful effects which have been produced  
by

by the wild uncultivated oratory of our methodist preachers.

The study, or neglect of this art, can not possibly be a matter of indifference to us. It must be productive of the best, or attended with the worst consequences. It must either effectually support religion against all opposition, or be the principal means of it's destruction. The church service, according as it is either well or ill administered, must excite great emotions, or set people to sleep; it must give delight, or occasion disgust; it must carry conviction of truth with it, or appear fictitious. And indeed nothing can contribute more strongly to make the latter opinion prevail, than hearing it's doctrines delivered in tones and accents quite foreign from nature and truth. In this, as in life, the general maxim will hold good, that before you can persuade a man into any opinion, he must first be convinced that you believe it yourself. This he can never be, unless the tones of voice in which you speak come from the heart, accompanied by corresponding looks, and gestures, which naturally result from a man who speaks in earnest.

And

And this is one of the best lights with which nature has furnished us to prevent our being imposed upon in our converse with each other; and indeed, without some such plain characteristical marks, truth could not long exist upon earth; nor could there be any mutual confidence amongst men. For considered only as artificial sounds, the words of falsehood are as easily spoke as those of truth; the lips and tongue discharge their office equally well in the one, and the other. But the tones that are declarative of truth, must come from the heart, which at the same time strikes other chords; the face, and limbs, act as unisons, and bear testimony to the truth so declared. And tho' this power may be usurped, and practised by art, so as to impose upon many; yet as it requires great pains and skill, the examples of those who succeed in the attempt, are not many. And as art, tho' it may imitate, can never come up to nature; tho' it may put on her semblance, can never be possessed of her energy; it can hardly ever impose on the judicious, and the observing. On this account, whenever we see those  
strong

strong stamps of truth made in nature's mint, the coin passes current, and the words are taken for sterling. Where they are not very obvious, we suspect counterfeits; and where they are absent, we suppose the metal is base.

If this be so, what must necessarily be the consequence of the manner in which our church service is generally performed? Must not truth itself pass for falshood, when covered all over with her vail? If none of the natural criterions by which she is distinguished appear, must not all pass for fictitious? How can a clergyman hope to gain belief to what he utters, when he utters it not in such a manner as if he believed it himself? This therefore may easily be considered as the great source of irreligion; nor would it be a very confident assertion to say, that this defect in the ministry has made more infidels than all the arts and subtleties of the enemies to religion. For as it must be allowed that the divine service is generally performed in a slovenly and disagreeable, or else in a cold and unaffecting manner; it follows, that many of nicer taste are kept  
away



away thro' disgust from places of religious worship, and they who continue to frequent them may easily be made the worse by it, but can hardly receive any benefit. Their devotion can not be raised, however it may flag, by hearing prayers ill read; nor will the doctrines from the pulpit acquire new force or credit, by being delivered in a lifeless manner, and in unnatural tones. On the contrary, being accustomed to see nothing in the mode but what is fictitious, men will habitually come to think the thing itself so; and will be insensibly led to consider the whole as a matter of form, a mere human institution to answer the purposes of government. The experience of mankind may be appealed to upon this occasion, whether it is not generally confessed in words, as well as shewn in practice, by those who visit the churches every Sunday, that they perform this ceremony more out of decency and example, than from any assistance they find there to devotion, or any instruction from the sermon. And indeed, were they not to confess it, the general coldness and inattention, the levity in the behaviour of some,

some, and drowsiness even to profound sleep in others, necessarily infused by the opiate of a dull monotony, would too too plainly evince the truth of the observation.\*

That contrary effects would follow from a contrary method, must be sensibly felt by all who have occasionally heard the service well performed, or a discourse well delivered. The different impressions which they then made upon them must convince them of this truth. And indeed it is sufficiently demonstrated by the crowds which flock to hear a preacher, whose natural talents for elocution have set him above the common run.

The ingenious author of the Spectator has written a paper on the reading of the liturgy, in so clear and forcible a manner, and it is so apposite to the case in point, that I am tempted to present part of it immediately to the eyes of my reader, instead of referring him to the book.

\* In this case, what was before observed of the laws may be applied to religion. ' There are two sorts of corruption, one when men do not observe religion, the other when they are corrupted by religion ; an incurable evil, because it is in the very remedy itself.

' The

† ‘ The well reading of the common  
‘ prayer is of so great importance, and so  
‘ much neglected, that I take the liberty  
‘ to offer to your consideration some par-  
‘ ticulars on that subject : and what more  
‘ worthy your observation than this ? A  
‘ thing so publick, and of so high conse-  
‘ quence. It is indeed wonderful, that  
‘ the frequent exercise of it should not  
‘ make the performers of that duty more  
‘ expert in it. This inability, as I con-  
‘ ceive, proceeds from the little care that  
‘ is taken of their reading while boys at  
‘ school ; where when they are got into  
‘ Latin, they are looked upon as above  
‘ English, the reading of which is wholly  
‘ neglected, or at least read to very little  
‘ purpose, without any due observations  
‘ made to them of the proper accent, and  
‘ manner of reading. By this means they  
‘ have acquired such ill habits as will not  
‘ easily be removed. The only way that  
‘ I know of to remedy this, is to propose  
‘ some person of great ability that way,  
‘ as a pattern for them ; example being

† Spect. vol. ii. No 147.

• most effectual to convince the learned,  
 • as well as to instruct the ignorant.

• You must know, sir, I have been a  
 • constant frequenter of the service of the  
 • church of England for above these four  
 • years last past, and till Sunday was seven-  
 • night never discovered to so great a de-  
 • gree, the excellency of the common  
 • prayer. When being at St. James's  
 • Garlick-hill church, I heard the service  
 • read so distinctly, so emphatically, and  
 • so fervently, that it was next to an im-  
 • possibility to be unattentive. My eyes  
 • and my thoughts could not wander as  
 • usual, but were confined to my prayers :  
 • I then considered I addressed myself  
 • to the Almighty, and not to a beauti-  
 • ful face. And when I reflected on my  
 • former performances of that duty, I  
 • found I had run it over as a matter of  
 • form, in comparison to the manner in  
 • which I then discharged it. My mind  
 • was really affected, and fervent wishes  
 • accompanied my words. The confession  
 • was read with such a resigned humility,  
 • the absolution with such a comfortable  
 • authority, the thanksgiving with such a

H

reli-



‘ religious joy, as made me feel those af-  
‘ fections of the mind in a manner I never  
‘ did before. To remedy therefore the  
‘ grievance above complained of, I hum-  
‘ bly propose, that this excellent reader,  
‘ upon the next, and every annual affem-  
‘ bly of the clergy of Sion-College, and  
‘ all other conventions, should read prayers  
‘ before them. For then those that are  
‘ afraid of stretching their mouths, and  
‘ spoiling their soft voice, will learn to read  
‘ with clearness, loudness, and strength.  
‘ Others that affect a rakish negligent air,  
‘ by folding their arms, and lolling on  
‘ their book, will be taught a decent be-  
‘ haviour, and comely erection of body.  
‘ Those that read so fast as if impatient  
‘ of their work, may learn to speak de-  
‘ liberately. There is another sort of per-  
‘ sons, whom I call Pindarick readers, as  
‘ being confined to no set measure; these  
‘ pronounce five or six words with great  
‘ deliberation, and the five or six subsequent  
‘ ones with as great celerity: the first  
‘ part of a sentence with a very exalted  
‘ voice, and the latter part with a sub-  
‘ missive one: some time again with one  
‘ fort

' sort of tone, and immediately after with  
 ' a very different one. These gentlemen  
 ' will learn of my admired reader an even-  
 ' ness of voice and delivery. And all who  
 ' are innocent of these affectations, but  
 ' read with such an indifference as if  
 ' they did not understand the language,  
 ' may then be informed of the art of read-  
 ' ing movingly, and fervently; how to  
 ' place the emphasis, and give the proper  
 ' accent to each word, and how to vary  
 ' the voice according to the nature of the  
 ' sentence.'

There can be no doubt that if prayers  
 were always read in the moving and fer-  
 vent manner above described, there would  
 be much stronger inducements to go to  
 church, and devotion would be much pro-  
 moted by it. But it is in his other office  
 of preaching, that the clergyman will  
 find the greatest occasion for skill in ora-  
 tory. Here the whole field of morality,  
 as well as religion, is opened to him to  
 display his talents. The important truths  
 of both are to be made plain by him, and  
 enforced. In this point of view, were  
 he equal to the task, he must be considered

as a member of the most useful and most honourable order that ever existed upon earth. What advantage, were he but equal in accomplishments, would he have over the orators of old (who were always considered as of the first rank in the state) in point of dignity of subject, power of moving the passions, and general utility. If the art of persuasion be allowed to be of more force, than either wit or knowledge, in acquiring a superiority over others, and at the same time to conciliate their esteem and love, in what a rank of pre-eminence might not this body of men have stood over all other professions, had they only applied themselves to the study of that art. Whilst the neglect of it has probably been one of the main causes of the contempt into which the order is fallen. Nor is it hard to account for this: for what can be a greater subject of ridicule than to see men daily attempting what they are not able to execute? Or what can possess one more strongly that an art (however entitled) is merely mechanical, than when it is every day seen performed in a mechanical manner: and it is obvious enough that

that if the profession of holy orders comes once to be considered as a mechanical art, it will of course be considered as below all others.

How far the extraordinary abilities, and perfection of skill in the artists may raise even the meaner arts in the estimation of the world, and how much a deficiency of talents, and imperfection in the professors, may degrade the noblest, is a point too obvious to be enlarged upon. The common sense of mankind confers rank and dignity on the several arts, and professions, according as they contribute to their benefit or delight. As the mind is superior to the body, such as promote the advantage of the former are preferred to such as have only the latter for their object; such as require intellectual powers, to such as stand in need only of the mechanical; and those professions which contribute to the use and profit of mankind, stand before such as only promote their pleasure. But those in which both are united, are clearly pre-eminent over the rest, and naturally acquire a superiority over each other according to the



several degrees of that union. This rule is as invariable as that of common sense, nor can any of these arts and professions lose their natural rank, but in proportion as they fail in answering their end ; which can only happen from the insufficiency of the artists, and professors. If we try the profession of holy orders by this rule, we shall find that it is evidently superior to all others. It must be allowed that the bulk of mankind have not leisure to be philosophers, or to see things in their causes. And yet the well-being of the state depends upon their actions being regulated by the rules of improved reason. They must therefore imbibe all their principles of knowledge, as well as conduct in life, from those who have opportunity and abilities to enquire into the sources of the moral duties, and the natural relations of things.

† ‘ But if to inform the understanding,  
‘ and regulate the will, is the most lasting  
‘ and diffusive benefit, there will not be  
‘ found so useful and excellent an institution as that of the christian priesthood, which is now become the scorn

† Guard. No 130.

‘ of fools. That a numerous order of men  
‘ should be consecrated to the study of the  
‘ most sublime and beneficial truths, with  
‘ a design to propagate them by their dis-  
‘ courses and writings, to inform their fel-  
‘ low-creatures of the being and attributes  
‘ of the deity, to possess their minds with  
‘ the sense of a future state, and not only  
‘ to explain the nature of every virtue and  
‘ moral duty, but likewise to persuade  
‘ mankind to the practice of them by the  
‘ most powerful and engaging motives, is  
‘ a thing so excellent and necessary to  
‘ the well-being of the world, that no  
‘ body but a modern free-thinker could  
‘ have the forehead, or folly, to turn it  
‘ into ridicule.’

But neither the scorn of fools, nor the  
ridicule of free-thinkers, could in the  
least affect, or depreciate an institution so  
excellent in it's nature, so absolutely ne-  
cessary to the welfare of mankind, if the  
ministry were really equal to the discharge  
of their office. Their chief end is to in-  
form the understanding, and regulate the  
will of others. The first can not be done  
unless their own ideas are conveyed into

the minds of others with perspicuity and force ; nor the last, unless the passions of men are wrought upon to excite them to good works, and deter them from such as are evil ; in as much as the passions are known to be the great movers to, or restrainers from action. Neither of which can be done without skill in oratory. All other requisites to the priesthood without that, tho' possessed in the most eminent degree, are useless to it's end. This is the preacher's instrument with which he is to work, and without this, his knowlege and piety are of as little use to the world, as the skill of a painter would be without pencil or colours, or that of a musician without the power of conveying sounds. Possessed of this, no artist whatever is so equal to the completion of his designs ; for tho' the difficulty of arriving at the end, be suitable to it's utility, and grandeur, and consequently beyond that of all others ; yet the means are proportioned, and adequate to the mighty work. For who upon earth is to be compared in faculties and powers, to the man, in whom are united the true philosopher,  
the

the christian hero, and the potent orator? Or how can such precepts fail of having their desired effect, which are founded on reason, supported by revelation, confirmed by the living example of the preacher, and impressed on the yielding mind by the irresistible charms of eloquence? A union so powerful, that what Agamemnon said of the destruction of Troy, with regard to the wise Nestor, may with much more truth and propriety be applied in this case; that were there but nine such men at the head of the church, the bulwarks of vice would soon be destroyed, and the whole state of corruption perish.

Mr. Addison in speaking upon this subject, has the following passage. \* ‘ The  
 ‘ light in which these points should be  
 ‘ exposed to the view of one who is pre-  
 ‘ judiced against the names, religion,  
 ‘ church, priest, and the like, is to con-  
 ‘ sider the clergy as so many philosophers,  
 ‘ the churches as schools, and their ser-  
 ‘ mons as lectures, for the information  
 ‘ and improvement of the audience. How

\* Guard. Numb. 130.

‘ would



‘ would the heart of Socrates or Tully  
‘ have rejoiced, had they lived in a na-  
‘ tion, where the law had made provision  
‘ for philosophers, to read lectures of mo-  
‘ rality and theology every seventh day,  
‘ in several thousands of schools erected at  
‘ the publick charge throughout the whole  
‘ country; at which lectures, all ranks,  
‘ and sexes, without distinction, were ob-  
‘ liged to be present, for their general im-  
‘ provement? And what wicked wretches  
‘ would they think those men, who should  
‘ endeavour to defeat the purpose of so  
‘ divine an institution?’

With all due deference to the judge-  
ment of so great a man, I think he has  
here mistaken the point; and what he has  
advanced would have had much more  
force, had he substituted the word orators,  
in the room of philosophers; and this  
would probably have been the case, could  
his assertion have been warranted by prac-  
tice. By orators, I mean such as they  
were of old, when none were thought  
worthy of that title but those who were  
at the same time philosophers. For it  
can hardly be expected that philosophy  
alone

alone could do more with us, than it did with the antients. That it should be more powerful when set to work by mercenary views, than when actuated by the nobler principle of fame. Or to consider it in regard to the times when it became mercenary amongst them, that it's professors should be more excellent with us, where their stipends are fixed, and settled without any reference to their abilities; than with them, where their whole income and emoluments depended upon their skill in the art which they professed.

The separation of philosophy from oratory was the main cause that both were in a short time destroyed. The union of the soul and body are not more necessary for any useful purpose in life, than the union of oratory and philosophy for their mutual welfare. Whilst the philosophers were busy in searching after the knowledge of things, they did not consider what an intimate connection there was between ideas and words; without a right use of which, they could neither make any sure progress themselves in science, nor justly communicate their thoughts to others. Accordingly

ingly we find that after the separation, an infinite variety of sects arose, each of which vain-gloriously boasted that they were possessed of the only true philosophy ; whilst in fact almost all their disputes were merely about words † ; nor was the confusion at Babel greater, occasioned by the variety of tongues ; than was the confusion of knowledge amongst these different sects, thro' their want of precision in language. Oratory and philosophy when united, like bullion stamped in the mint, occasioned a brisk and free circulation thro' the whole commonwealth of science ; when separated, they were to be considered as coin hoarded by misers, or melted down into pieces of ornamental plate. However rich private persons might think themselves in comparison of others, yet whilst the state was poor, there could be but little security for the preservation of the wealth amassed by individuals, as the members must necessarily be involved in the destruction of the whole.

† Verbi enim controversia jam diu torquet Græculos, homines contentionis cupidiores quam veritatis.

Cic. de orat. l. 1.

This

This separation was no less hurtful to the state itself, than to knowlege. The natural consequence of it was, that their wise men were no longer orators, their orators were no longer wise. When men of the greatest abilities, and integrity, who were the best qualified to support and invigorate the state, retired from publick business, and passed their lives in the shades of privacy and contemplation; their place was of course supplied by those of meaner talents and worse dispositions. As these had not virtue for their end, there was no occasion for wisdom as the means. Their ends being altogether selfish, cunning and the art of humouring and flattering the capricious multitude, were the surest means to attain them. Thus corruption and folly easily carried all before them, when wisdom and virtue had quitted the field. The soul of oratory was gone, and only the useless corpse remained, preserved and embalmed like the Egyptian mummies, by the care of rhetoricians. Nor could philosophy long survive it; for how could she hope to keep her ground, when she had parted  
with



with her arms of defence, and pulled down her own enclosures. Whilst she was united with eloquence, a sense of shame kept out all pretenders, and none but such as spoke with skill, with accuracy, clearness and elegance, could be heard without marks of scorn and contempt, upon any of the topicks of philosophy. But when philosophy grew ambitious, when she claimed an independent throne, and disdained all alliance with oratory, she indeed greatly increased the number of her subjects, but they were such as were far from adding to her power. When eloquence was despised, all men were at liberty to speak their thoughts publicly in their own manner †; this opened the mouths of multitudes of fools, who all thought they had an equal right, as rational beings, to harangue upon the subjects of right reason, and true philosophy. Nor could their pretensions to these be easily set aside, when the bulk

† Nunc autem quæ velut propria philosophiæ afferuntur passim tractamus omnes. Quis enim non de justo, æquo, ac bono, modo non & vir pessimus loquitur? Quis non etiam rusticorum aliqua de causis naturalibus quærit? Quint.

## CHAP. XV. EDUCATION. III

of mankind were to be their judges, equally ignorant with themselves, and equally interested in the claim. Besides, their pretensions to philosophy could only be determined in this case by the intellectual faculty, which is far from being predominant in the multitude; whereas the senses bore great sway in judging about eloquence, and consequently all mankind were capable of pronouncing with tolerable exactness about the merit of its professors †. Whilst therefore philosophy was guarded (if I may be allowed the expression) by the priesthood of oratory, the profane and the vulgar were kept out of her sanctuary. Her doctrines were explained only by such as had studied and understood them; knowledge in those being as necessary to the orator as skill in speaking; for the latter would be vain and useless without the former ‡. She was therefore always shewn in her true light,

† Nunquam de bono oratore, aut non bono, doctis hominibus cum populo dissentio fuit. Cic. in Brut. n. 185.

‡ Etenim ex rerum cognitione efflorescat, & redundet oportet oratio; quæ nisi subest res ab oratore percepta, cognita, inanem quandam habet elocutionem, & pene puerilem:

light, and all appeared regular and beautiful. But when this order was abolished, all men laid claim to the discharge of the sacred office; the ignorant and vain, the loud and the pretending, were the foremost in assuming the title. Her fences were destroyed by the multitude of pretenders, and her holy ground trampled by unhallowed feet. Her mazes and labyrinths were broken down by such as had not the clue to guide them thro' the regular confusion, and in a short time all was reduced to anarchy and chaos. Her doctrines, formerly so clear and beautiful when shewn by wisdom in the light of truth, were now darkened by ignorance and distorted by falshood. The words of knowlege were contaminated by the mouths of fools, and the precepts of virtue corrupted by the tongues of the vicious. Meanness joined with arrogance, and vanity with weakness in the professors, soon brought the profession itself into

puerilem. Dicendi enim virtus, nisi ei qui dicit, ea de quibus dicit, percepta sint, extare non potest.

Hæc autem oratio, si res non subest ab oratore percepta & cognita, aut nulla sit necesse est, aut omnium irrisione ludatur. Cic. de orat. lib. 1.

con-

contempt. Appearance with them supplied the place of reality, and form of substance.

\* For it was not by the means of virtue, or knowledge, that they laboured to  
\* be thought philosophers, but they made  
\* use of a solemn severity of countenance,  
\* and a dress different from the rest of the  
\* world, as coverings to the vilest morals.

If therefore oratory was so necessary to the support of philosophy, how much more must it be to that of religion? To enter into a minute disquisition of this point would take up too much time, and perhaps unnecessarily. It will be sufficient to consider the nature of the ends proposed by the two, and the necessity as well as proportion of the means will appear of course. The end of the antient philosopher was, to inform the understanding. The end of the christian philosopher is, not only to inform the understanding, but to purge and rectify the heart, and by means of the emotions and feelings of that, to regulate the will. Hence it is manifest, that in the object common to philosophy, and religion, the necessity and use of ora-



tory is the same; but in regard to the other object of religion distinct from philosophy, it has also a distinct necessity for, and a different use of, that art. To the first, only a partial application of it is required, whilst the last demands it's full powers in their largest extent. Where the understanding alone is the object, Quintilian does not hesitate to give the first place to oratory. ' If it be a person's  
' province frequently to speak upon the  
' subjects of justice, fortitude, temperance,  
' and the other moral virtues, [and there  
' can scarce be a cause found in which  
' some questions relative to these does not  
' arise] if all these are to be laid open,  
' and displayed only by invention and elocution, shall it be doubted wherever the  
' strength of genius, and fluency of speech  
' are necessary, whether the qualifications  
' of an orator are there the principal?' But where the question is about moving the heart, and exciting the passions, there he shews that oratory reigns alone, and that there the most vigorous of her powers are to be exerted. ' In publick orations elocution has a wonderful power and efficacy.

' ficacy. For the quality of our compo-  
 ' sitions is not of so great moment, as the  
 ' manner in which they are delivered ;  
 ' because every hearer is affected accord-  
 ' ing to his own sensations. On which  
 ' account, the strongest argument that an  
 ' orator can produce, will lose it's effect, if  
 ' not supported by an emphatical delivery.  
 ' For all the passions necessarily droop, if  
 ' they are not inflamed by the tone of  
 ' voice, the turn of countenance, and in-  
 ' deed the carriage of the whole body.  
 ' And happy are we when we have accom-  
 ' plished all this, if even then our judge  
 ' shall catch our warmth ; by no means,  
 ' can we affect him with a careless indiffe-  
 ' rence, but he must necessarily sink and  
 ' be dissolved in our drowsiness. Even the  
 ' actors upon the stage afford an excellent  
 ' example of this, who add so much grace  
 ' to the productions of our best poets, that  
 ' in the hearing, they give us infinitely  
 ' greater pleasure than in the reading ;  
 ' and gain our attention even to the vilest  
 ' scribblers : so that those pieces shall fre-  
 ' quently bring a crowded audience, which  
 ' are not allowed a place in a library.

‘ But if in cases which we know to be  
 ‘ feigned, and without foundation, elo-  
 ‘ cution alone is of such efficacy, as to ex-  
 ‘ cite anger, fears, anxiety ; how greatly  
 ‘ must it’s power be increased, when we  
 ‘ believe it to be founded in truth ? I shall,  
 ‘ indeed, make no scruple to affirm, that  
 ‘ but a very moderate oration recom-  
 ‘ mended by the powers of action, will be  
 ‘ of greater weight, than the best compo-  
 ‘ sition without it. On which account  
 ‘ Demosthenes being asked, what in the  
 ‘ whole field of oratory deserved the first  
 ‘ place, gave it to † elocution ; as also the  
 ‘ second, and the third, till the enquiry  
 ‘ ceased. By which he gave us to under-  
 ‘ stand, that he judged this not to be the  
 ‘ principal; but the only requisite.’

If the appearance of being firmly per-  
 suaded themselves of the truth of the opi-  
 nions which they endeavoured to propa-  
 gate, was thought so necessary to the hea-  
 then, how much more must it be to the

† The meaning of this word is thus defined by Cicero.  
*Pronunciatio est vocis, & vultus, & gestus moderatio cum*  
*venustate.* That is, Elocution is the graceful manage-  
 ment of the voice, countenance, and gesture.

christian philosophers, when the least suspicion induced of the truth of their doctrines, must not only destroy their force, but produce effects directly opposite to their intent. The antients were so convinced of this, that they preserved the appearance of truth, when the reality was gone, and the form remained long after the substance had perished. What shall we say then to our modern sect, who far from attempting to keep up this necessary semblance, are contented to deliver the sublimest truths in a fictitious manner? Or shall we wonder, when we consider that it is by appearance the judgements of the world are most influenced, that the shew and semblance of truth should in one case make profelytes to falsehood; and in the other, that the shew and semblance of fiction should make apostates from truth?

If the powers of eloquence, and action, were so absolutely necessary to the heathen orator, to accomplish his point in civil matters, it would be only a waste of time, and a fruitless repetition, to prove how much more necessary it is to a christian



orator, to bring about the great ends of religion. What Cicero says of the requisites to the discharge of that office, is exactly descriptive of the function of a clergyman. 'To instruct is his duty, to delight does him honour, and to move the passions is necessary.' And his short definition of the best and worst orator, will shew us to which class ours are to be referred. 'He is the best orator, who by the powers of elocution both instructs, and delights, and moves his auditory. From whence it is plain, that he who is most unlike the best, is the worst.'

But however near by nature the alliance between oratory and philosophy might be, yet it depended intirely upon man to fix, or destroy their union. As the maintaining such a union required great pains, labour, and attention, and as there was no particular profession of men to whom it was absolutely necessary, it is easy to see, that to separate them was no difficult task. Ambition, and a spirit of rivalry, might soon engage the professors of the two arts in disputes about priority. The philosopher, who enjoyed the mental  
pow-

powers in a more perfect degree than usual, and who might be endowed with an uncommon depth of penetration in his pursuits after knowlege and truth, though perhaps without any of the natural requisites to make him shine as an orator, would of course affect to despise talents which he did not possess, and depreciate an art which he looked upon as much inferior to his own, and which yet had rather a superior rank in the estimation of the world. The example of the chief would soon be followed by all his disciples. Whilst on the other side, the orator, furnished by the liberal hand of nature with uncommon powers of persuasion, and having improved these by the rules of his own art, would find nothing wanting to accomplish his ends; and therefore would gladly decry the painful and laborious disquisitions of philosophy, and despise it's contemplative votaries as unfit for action, and as useless drones in society. The war once declared between the chiefs, it would be too much the interest of the partisans still to keep it a-foot, and blow up the coals of discord, ever to suffer a reconciliation.

ment. Of this Cicero gives the following account. ' The antients down to the  
' time of Socrates always joined a perfect  
' knowlege of morality, of all that be-  
' longed to the conduct of private life, as  
' well as the management of publick af-  
' fairs, to skill in oratory. But at that  
' time, the eloquent and the learned being  
' divided into different sects by Socrates,  
' and this distinction being afterwards kept  
' up by all his disciples, the philosophers  
' and orators held each other in mutual  
' contempt.' And this war was ever after  
carried on with great obstinacy and ani-  
mosity on either side, till it ended in the  
ruin of both parties. How unnatural and  
impolitick the rupture was, the event  
shewed. And the necessity of the union  
of these two arts for their common sup-  
port, could not be proved more clearly  
than by the very manner in which the  
contest was managed. The orator and  
philosopher were mutually obliged to have  
recourse to each other's arms, both for de-  
fence and annoyance. It was whimsical  
enough to see one side using all the figures  
of rhetorick in order to depreciate ora-  
tory,

tory, and the other employing maxims taken from the deepest researches into truth, to run down philosophy. However, the pride, the passions, and interested views of the mercenary professors of each art became so far engaged in the dispute, that the breach was daily widened; and tho' a few were wise enough to keep clear of the quarrel, and borrow freely from both sides, yet this was only uniting the two arts in their own persons, and to serve their own purposes; but a general reunion was rendered impracticable. Nothing contributed so much to this, as a want of some profession amongst the antients, to which a union of these was absolutely necessary. But if we look into the present times, we shall quickly see that the case is different. The profession amongst us which is foremost in point of rank, utility, and number, evidently requires it. It would be hard to say, whether philosophy or oratory be most necessary to our priesthood, as the one would be useless without the other. Without knowlege, eloquence would be but an empty sound; without eloquence,  
know-



knowledge can never be shewn in it's true light. The long dispute between these two, was well determined by Cicero in the following manner. ' When  
' there is occasion, (as it often happens)  
' to speak concerning the immortal gods,  
' to treat of piety, of concord, of friendship;  
' of the common rights of citizens, of men, and nations; of equity,  
' temperance, magnanimity, and every  
' kind of virtue: I suppose all the academies and schools of philosophy will  
' cry out, that all subjects of this kind  
' are their property, and do not at all  
' belong to the orator; to whom when I  
' allow, that they shall have the liberty  
' of haranguing in every corner, to employ their idle time, yet I shall make no  
' scruple to determine, that it is peculiarly  
' the orator's province, to explain these  
' subjects with dignity, and pleasure to his  
' hearers, concerning which those men  
' hold formal disputations in a lean and  
' lifeless discourse.' Can there be a more accurate description of the perfect discharge of the function of the christian priesthood? To this order of men therefore,

fore, a re-union of these arts is not only necessary, but there are the strongest motives to encourage the attempt. All the means requisite to carry oratory to it's highest pitch, are furnished to them in a more liberal manner than they ever were to any other profession. Let us see what the most eminent writers upon the subject required to constitute their perfect orators, and we shall find them all included in the qualifications necessary to holy orders. One of the first requisites laid down by Cicero is, that he should be a good man. And Quintilian does not scruple to say, that none but a good man can be a perfect orator. This opinion is founded in the reason and nature of things. For as no one can deserve the name of an orator who does not use his talents in the cause of virtue, and as the perfection of eloquence consists in speaking from the heart, none but a good man can speak feelingly about that which is good. In whom therefore is this qualification so likely to be found, as in that class of men, whose sacred order obliges them to a greater purity of morals, and sanctity of life, than  
the

the rest of mankind? The next things required are, wisdom, and knowledge, in all affairs divine and human. To whom are these so essentially necessary, as to those whose office it is to instruct mankind in their duty towards God, and towards man? The power of persuasion and moving the passions, is the next talent required, without which all others are vain. And who can have more occasion for this, than he, whose business it is to prevail upon sensual men not to indulge themselves in sensual gratifications; and to persuade the eager and short-sighted, to forego a present and near advantage for one which is at a distance and out of their sight? Or how can he discharge his duty of regulating the passions, without having a power and command over those passions? In short, every thing which regards either the end or the means, the office or the talents, of a perfect orator, will be found in the most exact and circumstantial manner to be included in the proper discharge of the profession of holy orders. Let the following passages be applied to that, and see how perfectly they are suited to it.

‘ ’Tis

‘ ’Tis the orator’s part to give advice  
 ‘ upon the most important affairs, and to  
 ‘ deliver his sentiments with clearness and  
 ‘ dignity. ’Tis his to rouse people from  
 ‘ languor, and to restrain the impetuous  
 ‘ within due bounds. ’Tis his to pass sen-  
 ‘ tence of destruction on falshood, and of  
 ‘ safety on truth. Who with more ardour  
 ‘ than he can inflame men to virtue; who  
 ‘ with more force can recall them from  
 ‘ vice? Who has more power to brand  
 ‘ the wicked with disgrace; who can better  
 ‘ adorn the good with praise? Who has  
 ‘ more skill in curbing headstrong desire;  
 ‘ who can more gently administer the  
 ‘ balm of comfort to the afflicted?’

\* ‘ Eloquence treats of the duties of life.  
 ‘ Every one applies to himself what he  
 ‘ hears, and our minds attend with most  
 ‘ ease to points in which they have some  
 ‘ concern.’

† ‘ It is the peculiar property of an ora-  
 ‘ tor to be master of a grave and polished

\* Omnis eloquentia circa opera vitæ est, ad se refert  
 quisque quæ audit, id facillime accipiunt animi quod ag-  
 noscunt. Quint. l. 8. de orat. l. 1.

† Hoc enim est proprium oratoris, quod sæpe jam dixi,  
 oratio gravis, & ornata, & hominum sensibus, ac menti-  
 bus accommodata.

‘ style,



‘ style, adapted to the senses and understandings of his hearers.’

Would not one imagine that this picture was drawn from the pulpit, and could belong to nothing but the office of a good preacher.

These descriptions of perfect oratory were not drawn from the life, or what really did exist, but from an image formed in the minds of the writers, and which might exist. That it might exist, Cicero seems to be clearly of opinion, when he puts a reason into the mouth of Antonius why it had not then appeared. ‘ If that  
‘ be difficult for us to obtain, because  
‘ before we are well instructed in the art  
‘ of speaking, we are spurred on by an  
‘ eager ambition of appearing in publick,  
‘ it has notwithstanding a foundation in  
‘ the nature of things.’ But Cicero himself attributes the want of perfection in oratory entirely to its separation from philosophy. ‘ What shall I say of the  
‘ knowledge of nature, an acquaintance  
‘ with which, supplies large stores to oratory, in treating of the duties of life, of  
‘ virtue, of morals, that it can be either  
‘ described or understood without a great  
‘ deal

‘ deal of instruction in those very points ?  
‘ To these qualifications of such great  
‘ consequence, are to be added numberless  
‘ other accomplishments, which were formerly taught only by those who were  
‘ reckoned masters of the art of speaking.  
‘ So that no one can now attain that true  
‘ and perfect eloquence, because the schools  
‘ of philosophy are separated from the  
‘ schools of oratory ; and because a knowledge of things is taught by one, of language by another.’ Yet however difficult it might be rendered on this account, he did not doubt but that where great talents and great application were met in the same person, a complete orator might arise. To this effect he has given a speech to Antonius, that has somewhat the air of prophecy, and in which he seems to have shadowed out himself. ‘ As far as  
‘ I can conjecture from the genius of our  
‘ countrymen, I do not despair but that  
‘ some time or other a person may arise,  
‘ who with more intense study, with  
‘ greater leisure, and brighter faculties  
‘ than ours for learning, and also with  
‘ more laborious industry, after applying  
‘ him-

‘ himself entirely to hearing, reading, and  
‘ composition, may prove such a kind of  
‘ orator as we are in search of : one who  
‘ may with justice be called not only a  
‘ good speaker, but a man of accomplish-  
‘ ed eloquence.’ Here it is observable,  
that he was so far from thinking that such  
perfection in oratory should either become  
common or frequent, that he considers it  
only as a *rara avis*, and seems to confine  
the species, like that of the phoenix, to  
an individual. But Quintilian is more  
enlarged in his notions ; for in speaking  
on this subject, ‘when he wishes that ora-  
tory may regain it’s pristine dignity and  
power, by being restored to it’s possessions  
in philosophy, tho’ he also speaks in the  
singular number, yet it is clear he means  
that he wishes some superior order might  
hereafter be established, with whom ora-  
tory being most necessary, should hold the  
first rank, and philosophy be considered  
only as her handmaid. That by the au-  
thority of this order their several claims  
should be adjusted, and the odious di-  
stinction of names be destroyed. That  
neither should any longer pretend to the  
fove-

sovereign authority, but both in due subordination serve one common master. How would it rejoice the heart of Quinctilian could he have seen his wish accomplished in the establishment of an order of men, *to whom a perfect knowledge of all things, divine and human, was necessary, to shine forth, not only in their words, but in their lives?* An order, *such as no antiquity ever beheld*; which uniting in itself the full powers of oratory and philosophy in their largest extent, should enable men to communicate *the most perfect knowlege in the most perfect manner*. With what rapture must he have beheld oratory raised to a higher office, and a more exalted rank, than ever it could even claim before; no longer ministring to the purposes of mere mortal and earthly masters, but immediately employed in the service of the Most High, of God himself? Whilst philosophy, humbled from her proud pretensions, should be content to minister to her former rival. Such an office for oratory could never have entered into the thoughts of a heathen, as the gross absurdities of their religion, and ridi-



culous ideas of their gods, required the obscurity of mystery, and dark veil of superstition, but would by no means bear the light. So that however philosophy, of the pretended kind at least, might by collusion be employed in the service of religion, as by it's own darkness it might cast a deeper shade over the other, oratory must necessarily be banished from it's ministry, whose office it is to throw a strong light upon all which it handles. How would the august union of eloquence and philosophy with the sacred office, have struck the antients with admiration and astonishment? And considering the greatness of their powers when separate, what glorious effects would they not expect from the joint endeavours of religion, oratory, and philosophy, all mutually supporting and assisting each other in bringing about the noblest ends, the general good of society, and happiness of each individual? How much higher must their expectations be raised, when they should consider the purity of our religion, the unearthly and exalted notions which we entertain of the Deity, and the salutary system

system of laws for his conduct in life, promulgated to man by his great Author and Creator? Would not Plato triumph to see the day when his prediction was verified, that it was rather the work of God, than of human legislators, to provide a system of laws relative to those great duties, which mens appetites and passions render difficult? And when he contemplated not only the fitness of the system to answer the end, but likewise the fitness of the means to support the system, would he not cry out, that what was hitherto beyond the utmost reach of human thought, and was hid from the researches of the wisest men, could come from God alone? Would not Socrates himself think philosophy raised and dignified beyond his utmost conception, when ministering to oratory in such glorious purposes? How great must Cicero suppose the virtue of such a people to be, to the support of which he thought the belief of a future state absolutely necessary, when he should find that belief established, not in the minds of a few, but universally thro' a whole state; not founded on the weak basis of

reason only, but on the immoveable rock of revelation? Would they not all join with one voice to felicitate such a people, and say, ' O happy nation! to whom  
' the noblest and most important truths,  
' which were darkly seen, and as thro' a  
' mist, by only a few, and those the wisest  
' of the heathen world, are revealed in full  
' meridian light, and like the sun visible  
' to all eyes? Like that luminary commu-  
' nicating light and heat to all, to the low  
' as well as the high, to the weak in un-  
' derstanding, as well as to those of the  
' most improved capacities. Who need no  
' longer be distracted with doubts, and  
' waste your time in fruitless debates; to  
' whom the laws of right and wrong are  
' clearly laid open, and whose happiness  
' depends only upon the conformity of your  
' actions to those laws. Who may safely  
' attend your labours in your several voca-  
' tions, to obtain what is needful for the  
' comforts and the enjoyments of life, and  
' when you rest from those necessary toils,  
' receive instruction with delight, in all  
' that is needful for the discharge of your  
' several duties. Happy people! who  
need

' need no longer be confined by the fetters  
 ' of ignorance, or hoodwinked by super-  
 ' stition, who may be allowed the free  
 ' use of your reason in religious as well as  
 ' worldly matters, since there is no danger  
 ' of your mistaking the road, when you  
 ' have such knowing and unerring guides.  
 ' And you, ye holy men ! highly favoured  
 ' of heaven above all others, in whose di-  
 ' vine institution are united all the greatest  
 ' powers which God has given to man,  
 ' and which alone could make you worthy  
 ' of his service, let us with love and admi-  
 ' ration contemplate the beauty of your sa-  
 ' cred function, and with wonder and de-  
 ' light examine it's stupendous frame !  
 ' Happy men, whose order must command  
 ' respect and reverence to your persons,  
 ' whose talents must conciliate to you the  
 ' esteem and love of mankind ! Employed  
 ' from your earliest days in treasuring up  
 ' knowlege and wisdom, not to lie con-  
 ' cealed like the miser's hoard, but to be  
 ' displayed to the eyes of men, enriching  
 ' the beholders, without impoverishing  
 ' yourselves, and by the very act of com-  
 ' munication increasing, not diminishing,



‘ your store. Free from the anxious pur-  
‘ suits of life, and supported by the labour  
‘ of others, your whole time may be em-  
‘ ployed in ministring to the glory of  
‘ him whose service is perfect freedom,  
‘ and in promoting the welfare of your  
‘ fellow creatures, in establishing peace  
‘ and good-will amongst men. Thrice  
‘ happy orators, who enjoy all the delight,  
‘ the praise, the perfection of your art,  
‘ without the difficulties, the labours, the  
‘ dangers that attended it of old ! You  
‘ need no pains to procure silence, no arts  
‘ to engage attention ; the sanctity of the  
‘ temple ensures the one, the import-  
‘ ance and interesting nature of the sub-  
‘ ject to all hearers commands the other.  
‘ Secure in your celestial armour, tho’  
‘ you attack the wicked with force and  
‘ might, you need fear no enemies ; and  
‘ the Philips and Anthonies of the world  
‘ may be lashed by you without danger.  
‘ Confined to labour on no barren or un-  
‘ important subjects, you have the whole  
‘ universe for your theme, whatever be-  
‘ longs to divine or human nature, to spi-  
‘ ritual or material existence. In treat-  
‘ ing

' ing of these, the past becomes as the  
 ' present, and the future is anticipated.  
 ' Your ancestors supply you with know-  
 ' lege, posterity with arguments ; the col-  
 ' lected wisdom of ages is your magazine,  
 ' and all nature your store-house. But  
 ' more particularly for your use was that  
 ' book of light sent into the world, where-  
 ' in the Godhead has displayed himself  
 ' in as ample a manner as could be com-  
 ' prehended by mortal capacities. Nor  
 ' were less supplies necessary to treat on  
 ' such subjects, as the wonderful attri-  
 ' butes of the Deity, the social duties of  
 ' man, and the glorious prospect of a fu-  
 ' ture state of existence. How must the  
 ' hearts of your hearers glow within them,  
 ' when the whole force of knowlege and  
 ' eloquence are united upon such impor-  
 ' tant topicks ; and how must their love,  
 ' admiration, and gratitude burn towards  
 ' you their teachers and benefactors, whose  
 ' whole labours are employed to their  
 ' profit and delight ? Equal to us in all  
 ' the arts of captivating the senses, how  
 ' much more lordly is your sway over the  
 ' imagination, and the passions ? What

‘ vigorous flights may you not lead fancy,  
‘ when freed from the fetters of matter,  
‘ through spiritual regions, and a bound-  
‘ less eternity, till this world shall appear  
‘ but as a speck, and it’s duration but as a  
‘ point of time ? How infinitely more  
‘ powerful must the exertions of hope and  
‘ fear be, in proportion to the immensity  
‘ of their object ? What were the con-  
‘ quests of Alexander or Cæsar compared  
‘ to yours ? Theirs were over men, over  
‘ their brethren : yours are over the ene-  
‘ mies to human nature, over sin, and  
‘ over death.’

But should these sages of antiquity be informed that things were quite otherwise ; that vice and libertinism were never known to have arrived at a greater pitch in any country ; that virtue was neglected or ridiculed, and religion, far from answering it’s end, was together with the priesthood held in contempt ; must they not either conclude, that the people were the most stupid and hardened in the world, or that they who were dedicated to the service of the church, were not qualified to discharge their office. When they  
should

should be told, that no order ever produced such numbers of men distinguished for knowledge and wisdom, remarkable for purity of morals, and sanctity of life; that their discourses in the cause of virtue and religion, were the noblest productions that ever came from the wit of man; they would be apt to suffer the former opinion to take place. But should they be informed, that in the education of these men, great care was taken to instruct them in philosophy, and to store their minds with all sorts of knowledge, but none at all about the art of communicating these to others by speech; that so far from training them in the study and practice of oratory, their very first principles of speaking were corrupted by the most ignorant teachers, and that this error was never afterwards amended; that in consequence of this they delivered the words of truth in the tones of fiction, and were so far from delighting, that they disgusted their hearers; the whole wonder would at once vanish. They would then see that the priesthood was no longer that powerful order which  
they



they had imagined, and would consider it in the same situation as a man whose intellects were sound, and outward form of body perfect, but who being deprived of the use of his limbs, was incapable of serving himself or others.

Indeed it is so evident that the proper arms for the use of the members of the church militant here on earth, for the foldiers in Christ, can be drawn from no stores but those of oratory, that it is astonishing how it could possibly be so entirely neglected. Nor can this fault be at all imputed to the clergy, but to their education. We may as well blame the Chinese women for want of the perfect use of their limbs in walking, as those for want of power in speaking. When they enter upon the discharge of their duty, they may be sensible of the defect, but can find no remedy. The bad habits they have acquired can not be removed, but by the diligent assistance of skilful persons, and none such are to be found. This was the true reason why so many eminent divines were obliged to have recourse to arms, in the exercise of which they had been  
been

been trained, and to desert those whose use they had never been taught; and it was necessity which reduced them to employ the weaker means of writing, to support their cause, instead of the more powerful assistance of oratory.

## C H A P. XVI.

*Ill consequences of this defect both to church and state, and the great advantages which would result to both from the study of oratory.*

**T**HIS defect in the education of those destined to holy orders, was a fundamental error at the reformation; and from that fatal oversight, and an unhappy mistake in the establishment for the support of the clergy, may be dated the downfall of religion, and decay of christian piety. When the exorbitant wealth and temporal power of the church, together with a tyrannical authority exercised over the minds of men, called aloud for a reformation, great care should have been taken not to have carried mat-  
ters

ters into extremes. Tho' it was right to strip her of her superfluities, and her almost princely territories, yet it was necessary she should have a competency, and that her income should be independent. And in proportion as she was deprived of that power, which absurdly demanded a blind obedience to her will, she ought to have been furnished with all the arts of persuasion, without which she could no longer be of use. What project of Satan's could have more effectually sown the seeds of perpetual discord between the clergy and laity, than giving the former an annual claim upon the latter of a tenth part of their substance? And with what reluctance must they who earn their bread with the sweat of their brow, part with so much of the fruit of their toils, for what they think so little value received? For, being no longer hoodwinked by superstition, but seeing thro' the clear light of reason, they would find that the observation of a few forms and ceremonies, was all that they generally got for their money, and their very religion pointed out to them to set little value upon those.

They

They would often have occasion to observe, that these forms and ceremonies were mechanically gone thro' by a poor drudge at thirty or forty pounds per ann. and sometimes at less, and consequently would look upon what was given over and above as superfluous; not as given to the holy office, but to support the pride and luxury of mere temporal men. In this view it is no wonder that the profession itself should come to be hated, and that the bulk of mankind should consider it as a burthen. The same cause would naturally produce the same effect in regard to any other profession. For let us suppose, that people were obliged to contribute a certain proportion of their income to the support of lawyers, and physicians, for the preservation of their properties, and their healths; and this was to be levied on all without distinction; on those whose titles to their estates were clear and uncontroverted, and on such as enjoyed a perfect state of health, as well as on those whose right was disputable, and such as laboured under disorders; and that men were not at liberty to chuse their  
their



their own lawyer, or physician, but to make use of such as were appointed for them, whether skilful or not; what outcry must not of course be raised against those professions, and how unreasonable would men think the burthen imposed on them? This argument will hold equally strong in regard to those who look upon the church only as a civil institution. And nothing but a perfect discharge of their duty in the clergy, can make the bulk of mankind consider it in any other light. As therefore a dislike and hatred of the whole order were deeply rooted in the self-interest of mankind, and a strong prejudice against the doctrines they preached, in their passions; what could possibly enable the priesthood to support their holy cause, but the powers of persuasion, and the talents of conciliating men's love and gratitude to them, from the delight and profit which they should receive from their labours? Or how could they expect to prevail upon their hearers to embrace doctrines so opposite to their passions, and reduce them to practice, unless they should have power to controul those passions, and  
to

to interest such as are most powerful over the mind on their side? This ought therefore to have been chiefly attended to at the reformation, and a new method of education established for such as were to be guardians to the new church; wherein the practice and exercise of the only weapons which could possibly defend it, should have chiefly employed their time. But in changes it seldom happens that a due medium is observed; the passions being generally more concerned in bringing them about than reason; men in avoiding one extreme for the most part run into another. So fared it in regard to the church at the time of the reformation. They were so busy and eager to destroy her exorbitant power, that they reduced her to a deplorable state of weakness. They were so jealous of the former usurped authority of the priests, that they did not care to trust them with any at all. And indeed there was hardly any thing left to the function but the name, and in general a poor subsistence grudgingly paid, the source of perpetual ill-will from those who parted with it. They were not content

tent with destroying her lofty citadel and high towers of strength, they likewise razed her walls, and left her open and naked to the world, appointing only a few watchmen for her protection without arms, or discipline; who retaining nothing but the odious name of her former ministers, without their power, were more likely to invite than to repel an attack. Is it any wonder that thus circumstanced her destruction should soon be accomplished? Accordingly we find that it was brought about in a short space of time. It is well worth observing what means and instruments were employed on this occasion. The appearance of religion was assumed to destroy the reality; and the weapons which ought to have been employed in defence of the church, were made use of with success in pulling it down. Political sects arose, under the name and colour of religious, who had recourse to the arms of oratory, neglected and disused by the established ministry. 'Tis true, they handled them unskilfully, with relation to their true use, but with art enough to answer their own ends. As truth was not in their cause,  
neither

neither was it in their eloquence. Their business was not to apply to the understanding, or to the passions, thro' the heart, which could be only done by rational and natural means; but to work upon the fancy and imagination, by the enthusiastic notions of the operations of the spirit. To answer this end, canting and frantick gestures might be more forcible than the best regulated oratory; for the less natural the tones, and the less human the looks and gestures might appear, the more in the eyes of a fanatick multitude would they seem to be divine inspirations, and the workings of the spirit. This was only a revival of the artifice of those priests who delivered the oracles of old. However unnatural this mode of eloquence might be, yet it was much more forcible than that dull insipid one adopted by the established ministry, as it at least rouzed the attention, and kept the senses awake. And the emotions with which their discourses were delivered, had also this effect on vulgar hearers, of making them think the preachers in earnest; a point of all others the most likely to give them weight. It



is no wonder therefore, that the very form itself should daily make profelytes to their worship, since it may be doubted whether all the passions together have greater power over the mind of man than enthusiasm alone. The leaders of such a sect living in a constant habit of dissimulation, must of course acquire the art of seeming thoroughly possessed themselves of the opinions which they broached, and consequently the greatest power of persuading others into the same. The abbè Du Bos, in his Critical Reflections, &c. has a passage remarkably applicable to the case in point. ‘ Of all the talents proper for  
‘ raising man to a state of empire and com-  
‘ mand, a superiority of wit and know-  
‘ lege is not the most effectual; ’tis the art  
‘ of moving men as one pleases; an art  
‘ that is acquired principally by a person’s  
‘ seeming to be moved, and penetrated  
‘ with those very sentiments he intends to  
‘ inspire. ’Tis the art of being like Cati-  
‘ line, *cujuslibet rei simulator*, which you  
‘ may call if you please, the art of being a  
‘ complete actor. Those amongst the  
‘ English that are best acquainted with the  
‘ his-

‘ history of their own country, do not  
‘ mention the name of Oliver Cromwell  
‘ with the same admiration, as the gene-  
‘ rality of that nation ; they are far from  
‘ allowing him that extensive, penetrating,  
‘ superior genius, with which so many are  
‘ pleased to honour him. They reduce  
‘ therefore his whole merit to his bravery,  
‘ as a soldier, and to a peculiar talent of  
‘ seeming penetrated with the sentiments  
‘ which he had a mind to feign, and ap-  
‘ pearing moved with those passions he  
‘ desired to inspire, as if he had really felt  
‘ them himself. Thurloe, they say, in-  
‘ structed him occasionally what per-  
‘ sons he was to prevail upon in order  
‘ to make his project succeed, and in what  
‘ manner it was proper to attack them ;  
‘ just as one would tutor a woman that is  
‘ to be employed in acting some character  
‘ of importance. Oliver spoke to them  
‘ afterwards in so pathetic a manner, as  
‘ to bring them over to his party.’

Here we may see that the most forcible  
part of oratory was employed in the de-  
struction of the church and state, and con-

frequently may judge how necessary it is for their support.

St. Austin, in his fourth book on the christian doctrine, recommends and enforces the study and practice of it to all in holy orders by the strongest arguments.

‘ Since it is by the art of rhetorick that  
‘ people are enabled to establish true and  
‘ false opinions, who shall dare to say that  
‘ truth should be without arms in the  
‘ persons of those who are to defend it  
‘ against falsehood ? Can it be believed that  
‘ those who endeavour to enforce a false  
‘ doctrine should be skilled in the art of  
‘ conciliating to themselves the good will  
‘ and attention of their hearers by their  
‘ address, and that those who support the  
‘ cause of truth should not be possessed of  
‘ this skill ? That the one should speak of  
‘ what is false with brevity and verisimili-  
‘ tude, and the other shall discourse of  
‘ what is true, in so tedious, disgusting,  
‘ and unnatural a manner, as to give pain  
‘ to their hearers, and make them think  
‘ their doctrines not credible ; that those  
‘ should combat truth with false argu-  
‘ ments,

' ments, and establish their false opinions;  
 ' and that these should neither be capable  
 ' of defending what is true, nor of con-  
 ' futing what is false; that the former  
 ' should have such power over the minds  
 ' of their hearers as to lead them whither  
 ' they please; that they should excite in  
 ' them astonishment, sadness, or joy; that  
 ' they should animate, move, and turn them  
 ' as they think proper; and that the lat-  
 ' ter should remain cold, unaffecting, and  
 ' without power? Who can be so absurd  
 ' as to admit so extravagant a thought?  
 ' Since therefore eloquence, which has a  
 ' prodigious power in persuading people  
 ' either to false or true opinions, lies open  
 ' to all who are inclined to make use of it,  
 ' what can be the reason that the good do  
 ' not employ themselves in acquiring an  
 ' art so necessary for the defence of truth?  
 ' Especially when 'tis considered that the  
 ' wicked use it with success in defending  
 ' injustice, in establishing error, and in  
 ' accomplishing their pernicious de-  
 ' signs.'

Here it may be observed, that there is  
 no argument urged to enforce the study



of eloquence for the use of the pulpit, which is not equally cogent in regard to the senate-house, and the bar.

Indeed the necessity of it to all three is so very manifest to any one, who reflects ever so little upon the point, that it might be judged a waste of time to have dwelt so long upon this topick, did not the total neglect of it, and a general deficiency, consequential from that, warrant an opinion, that it has either not been considered sufficiently by those whose business it is, or that it has not appeared to them to be of so important a nature as is here pretended.

But it may be asked, supposing the great use, importance, and necessity of this art were established in their utmost extent, beyond all possibility of doubt or cavil, it may be asked, I say, how is it to be acquired? The Romans have pointed out the way, and their example is a sufficient light to guide us. Cicero when he gives a definition of this art, in the same sentence points out the means to attain it.

‘ Elocution is a graceful management of  
‘ the voice, countenance, and gesture.

‘ It

‘ It is to be acquired, as all other arts are,  
 ‘ by precept, by example, by practice.’  
 ‘ Till these means were tried, we find that  
 oratory was at a very low ebb in Rome.  
 It had only a comparative excellence arising  
 from the different degrees of the natural  
 requisites in the speakers. We find  
 Antonius, who immediately preceded Cicero,  
 peremptorily pronouncing, that tho’  
 he knew some who were good speakers,  
 he knew not one worthy of the name of  
 orator. His testimony is the more to be  
 relied on, as he was himself esteemed  
 one of the first orators of the age. ‘ I  
 ‘ was of that opinion, when I said in a  
 ‘ book which I published, that I had  
 ‘ known some good speakers, but no good  
 ‘ orator: for I called him a good speaker,  
 ‘ who had ingenuity and clearness of ex-  
 ‘ pression, sufficient to pass well amongst  
 ‘ men of moderate judgment; but would  
 ‘ allow none to be a good orator, but such  
 ‘ a one alone who should be able in an ad-  
 ‘ mirable and exalted manner to amplify  
 ‘ and enrich his subject: who had stored  
 ‘ his understanding and his memory with

‘ all the treasures belonging to a perfect  
‘ speaker.’ In this representation, our  
times may be looked upon as exactly si-  
milar to the days of Antonius, and it will  
be our own fault if the rising generation  
do not see an age like that which succeed-  
ed at Rome.

The same cause would infallibly produce  
the same effect. A man of these times and  
of this country, may without any impu-  
tation of vanity, or pretence to prophe-  
cy, say of our countrymen, what Anto-  
nius did of his in a passage above cited.

The means by which oratory had risen  
to such a pitch of perfection in his days,  
are clearly and concisely laid down by  
Cicero. ‘ After the establishment of our  
‘ universal empire, when the long con-  
‘ tinuance of peace afforded leisure time,  
‘ there was scarce any young man desirous  
‘ of glory, who did not apply himself  
‘ with all his might to the study of elo-  
‘ quence. But at first being ignorant of  
‘ all principles of the art, of the mighty  
‘ force of practice, and not thinking that  
‘ there were any certain rules to guide  
‘ them,

‘ them, they each of them made what  
‘ advances they could by the strength of  
‘ their own genius only, and reflection.  
‘ But afterwards, when they had heard  
‘ the Greek orators, were made acquainted  
‘ with their learning, and attended the  
‘ lectures of their rhetoricians, it is incre-  
‘ dible with what an ardent desire of the  
‘ study of eloquence our people were in-  
‘ flamed.’ If we had the same advan-  
tages, if our youth were trained up un-  
der masters equally skilful with the Greek  
rhetoricians, in the principles of the art,  
equally qualified to instruct them by pre-  
cept and example, and to perfect them  
by practice, shall it be doubted whether  
the British oratory would arrive at as  
great a pitch of perfection as the Roman?  
Britons will hardly yield the palm either  
to Greece or Rome, in point of talents  
or industry; nor have they ever failed to  
accomplish their ends in whatever they  
undertook equally well with them, where  
their means were of equal force. Shall  
any one now living suppose, that Britain  
is less stored with men of true genius  
and strong natural powers for oratory,  
who



who has heard a Walpole, a Pultney, a Chesterfield, a Granville, a Pitt, a Murray, and many others? or can they conceive that equal talents cultivated with equal pains, would not produce equal perfection? Are our motives to the study and practice of this art, or the opportunities of displaying it, inferior to theirs? We may soon see by examining them.

‘ They were spurred on by the importance, variety, and multitude of causes of all kinds, to perfect the knowledge which each had acquired in his course of study, by constant practice, far superior to precept. There were also at that time, as now, the highest rewards attending this study, in point of reputation, of riches, and of honours.’ May we not with equal truth and as little appearance of vain-glory say of our countrymen what Cicero said of his; ‘ The genius of our people (as may be judged from many instances) far excelled that of all other nations.’ And conclude as he does, ‘ It is therefore very surprising that in the history of past times we find so small a number of good orators.’ His

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manner of answering this question favours more of vanity than truth, and seems rather calculated to enhance his own merit, than to give a just account of the thing. ‘ But there is something more ‘ in this than people are aware of ; and ‘ it arises from an acquaintance with a ‘ greater number of arts and more various ‘ studies than is imagined. For when ‘ we consider the crowds of pupils and ‘ preceptors, the many instances of extraordinary genius, the infinite variety ‘ of causes, the noble rewards attendant ‘ on eloquence, what cause can be assigned ‘ for the great scarcity of orators, but the ‘ incredible weight and difficulty of the ‘ art itself ?’ For tho’ we should allow him the full extent of his argument, and acknowledge all that prodigious difficulty in the art which he afterwards displays with such eloquence, yet it is evident from fact, that the scarcity of orators in Rome previous to his time, can not be accounted for on that principle. It could be owing to nothing but their want of studying it methodically as an art, of which the following is a strong presumptive proof ; that soon after it came to be studied in that

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manner, and made part of the discipline of youth, there arose a great number of excellent orators, in whom were united all those perfections, the want of which made them refuse the name to their predecessors, whose natural abilities they had no reason to judge were at all inferior, but whose acquired skill was less. To corroborate this proof it may be observed, that Athens, where this art was made the chief study, abounded in excellent orators, tho' the other states of Greece, which neglected it, produced none of any name. And that Rome never produced one worthy to be handed down to posterity by that name, till this method of study was introduced. The writers upon this subject do not even except P. Crassus, Scipio, Lælius, and the Gracchi. In speaking to this point, Velleius Paterculus says, f But oratory in all it's branches, and the e perfection of prose-writing, if we may e except Cato (with all due respect to P. e Crassus, Scipio, Lælius, the Gracchi, e Fannius and Ser. Galba be it spoken) e blazed out in such lustre in the time of e that prince of orators, Cicero, that we f can be pleased with the works of but e very

‘ very few before his days, but can admire  
 ‘ none which were not produced by per-  
 ‘ sons whom he had seen, or who had seen  
 ‘ him.’ So that the age of Cicero may be  
 considered as the only period of time in  
 which oratory flourished at Rome, and this  
 was the age in which it was first taught  
 there as an art. That alone is sufficient to  
 account for it’s never having flourished there  
 before ; and that it immediately afterwards  
 fell into decay and ruin, was owing to the  
 change in their constitution. It must be  
 obvious enough to the most common re-  
 flection, that oratory could no longer dwell  
 in a place, from which liberty had been  
 banished.

That a proper method of instruction is  
 necessary to bring oratory to any degree  
 of perfection, may be easily seen by com-  
 paring it with any of the arts so taught.  
 Suppose a man of the greatest genius for  
 musick or painting, should set out upon  
 his own strength, without precept or ex-  
 ample, to acquire skill and execution in  
 either of those arts, would not a whole  
 life spent in the pursuit make a smaller  
 progress than a single year under a good  
 master ? And shall a greater advance be



expected from a man's own labour in an art infinitely more complicated in it's principles, and difficult in it's execution? This is the manner in which Cicero has accounted for it's low state in the time of his predecessors: or have we reason to suppose, that if proper masters were provided to instruct them by precept, to model them by example, and perfect them by practice, that the British youth would not burn with as ardent a desire as the Roman, to furnish themselves with so necessary an accomplishment? This is the more likely, as it might be proved from the nature of the British constitution, that their toil and labour in arriving at a sufficient degree of perfection in this art, would not be in any sort of proportion to those of the antients; that the opportunities of displaying it would be more frequent, and upon subjects of more importance; and that the rewards, whether of honour or profit, would be as great and certain. Can it be believed in such a case, that the young nobleman, born to be one of the legislature, or the commoner who may hope to be elected into that body, or the lawyer who is to plead  
at

at the bar, would not each apply himself to the study of an art, attended with such pleasure to themselves as well as to their hearers; and productive of such honour and profit to them in the rest of their lives? Is it to be thought (setting aside all other considerations) that self-interest alone would not incite every person destined for holy orders, to procure a talent which he should have as many opportunities of displaying, as he performs acts of duty? Would not this be the means of making many of them conspicuous in life, who now pass their days in obscurity, or contempt? Might not such as had abilities to distinguish themselves by writing, by the study of this art, still make their writings more polished and agreeable to the present age, as well as more worthy to be transmitted to posterity? And would they not thus be doubly armed in defence of their cause? Might not others unpossessed of sufficient talents to make themselves conspicuous by writing, still be distinguished by the powers of oratory alone, enjoying at least a present fame, and doing great service to the present generation? Might not powers  
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in preaching be a surer means of gaining preferment than talents in writing? And whilst each received a particular benefit and advantage to himself, what lustre would not their endeavours reflect upon their whole order? And how would the common cause be supported by their joint labours? If Cicero's opinion be just, how many ornaments might they not add to the whole state? If he thought a single orator of excellence was of such moment to the welfare of the community, how much more benefit to the publick might be derived from the united force of a number all aiming at the same end? How applicable to them would his sentence be, where he says, 'I lay it down as  
' a maxim, that on the skill and wisdom  
' of a complete orator, not only his own  
' personal dignity, but the welfare of  
' many individuals, and the safety of the  
' whole state, in a great measure depend.'  
Or if this were applied to such as are in the legislature, would it not be equally just? The use and necessity of it to the state in the members of that body are so apparent, that they need scarce be mentioned. They are the grand council of  
the

the nation, and in a multitude of counsellors, it is said, there is safety. To be a counsellor, it is necessary that a man should be able to give counsel; if this be essential, how much is the number of ours diminished? How many men of wisdom and virtue have fate in that assembly, who from this incapacity to discharge their office, were of no more benefit to the publick than the meanest members in it? How many shining talents have been there buried in silence, like those of Mr. Addison, thro' a false shame, arising from the want of knowlege and practice in the art of speaking in publick? How many persons of the highest abilities, capable of drawing senates after them, and giving a turn to debates, have been there hid in the crowd, thro' this defect, and reduced only to the power of a single voice? Reduced to a single unit, when by the addition of the oratorical powers they might arise to an indefinite value. If in the multitude of counsellors there be safety, will not the state be in danger, in proportion as their number is reduced? Would it not be easier for wicked and designing men to accomplish their ends in that case? And

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when



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when the counsellors of weight and power are but few, might not a confederacy amongst them easily ruin the state? Is it not to be supposed, that selfish men who have views opposite to the publick good, will labour with all their might to acquire the management of a weapon, by which alone they can carry their points, and shall the guardians of the publick have no arms to oppose them? Should we not in this case say with St. Austin, ‘ Since  
‘ therefore eloquence, which has a prodigious power in persuading people either  
‘ to true or false opinions, lies open to all  
‘ who are inclined to make use of it, what  
‘ can be the reason that the good do not  
‘ employ themselves in acquiring an art  
‘ so necessary for the defence of truth?  
‘ Especially when it is considered, that the  
‘ wicked use it with success, in defending  
‘ injustice, in establishing error, and in  
‘ accomplishing their pernicious designs.’

Upon the whole, when it is considered that the members of the two most necessary professions to society, the church and the law, to whose care all the spiritual and temporal concerns of mankind are committed; and that they who compose the  
grand

grand council of the nation, upon whom the welfare and safety of the state depend, can not possibly discharge their duty without skill in speaking, it may be matter of the highest astonishment that this art has never hitherto been studied in Great Britain. Should we hear of any country where the professors of musick, or painting, never consider the principles of their arts, or reduce their practice to rule, but are content to follow such models and patterns as chance has thrown in their way, how should we pity their ignorance, and laugh at their absurdity? And yet this practice is not so contrary to common sense as ours, inasmuch as the art of which we are speaking, is of all others the most difficult to be attained without rules; and inasmuch as the want of skill in it is attended with the worst consequences, and greatest dangers to the state.

Let us now take a short survey of what has hitherto been done. The principal point in view was to prove, that some of the greatest evils in the state arose from a defective education: In order to do this it has been laid down as a maxim, that no state can thrive unless the education of



youth be suited to it's principle. It has been proved, that no principle could possibly support our constitution but that of religion; and it has been shewn, that religion can not be upheld without skill in oratory, in it's ministers. It has been shewn also, that the knowlege of that art is equally necessary in those who compose the legislative body, and are consequently the guardians of the state. So far therefore as the support of it's principle is necessary to the preservation of the state, and so far as a proper discharge of their duty in it's guardians is necessary to it's safety, so far is the study of oratory essential to the very being of the British constitution. Let us now consider how far it may contribute to it's well-being, and to it's flourishing condition. In order to do this, I shall in the next place endeavour to shew it's use in regard to language, and consequently to knowlege; and afterwards consider how far it may contribute to the improvement of the liberal arts, and consequently to politeness.

END of the FIRST BOOK



B R I T I S H  
E D U C A T I O N , &c.

BOOK II. CHAP. I.

*Of the excellence and use of the Greek and  
Roman languages.*

IT was to the care taken in the cultivation of their languages, that Greece, and Rome, owed that splendor, which eclipsed all the other nations of the world. By that, they have triumphed over time and oblivion, and still maintain a superiority over all ages, either before or since. Other countries may have produced even greater law-givers, commanders, and philosophers, whose institutions, actions and

knowledge, might be far superior to theirs; but they alone had the art of displaying those in the best light to the world, and of perpetuating them to the end of time. The conquests of Ninus, Sesostris, Cyrus, and many more, might have far exceeded those of their greatest heroes; and yet is it not owing to the Greek language that any traces of them remain, or that even their names are handed down to us?

In the latter ages, what mighty heroes have arisen, whose actions may in themselves be far superior to any of antiquity? And yet are the great exploits of Odin, Tamerlane, and Almanzor, as well known to the world as those of Alexander and Cæsar? What shining and remarkable examples of heroick virtue have not the annals of our christian potentates afforded? Such as Scanderbeg, Henry the fourth of France, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, the Black Prince, and Henry the fifth of our own country, William prince of Orange, founder of the Belgick state, and our ever memorable K. William the third, the preserver of the liberties of Europe; with many more, who upon a fair comparison

rison would not yield to the greatest names of antiquity. And yet are these ranked in the world in the same class with Leonidas, Epaminondas, Scipio, Cato, and the army of patriots which the antient writers have drawn out? On the contrary, how little do we know in general, of the history of our own times, tho' that be most what imports us, or of the exploits of those to whom we are most indebted for the worldly blessings we enjoy; whilst the names and actions even of those who lived in the dark and fabulous ages of the Greek and Roman story, are familiar to the mouths of all men? Who is there that can not speak of Hercules, Theseus, Romulus, the Horatii, Cocles, and a thousand others, whose actions as referred to them may not only be doubted, but the very existence of many of the persons, as in the heroes of the Iliad? Yet these are all consigned to immortality, only by being recorded in those ever living languages, as if their writers had the power of Midas, of turning all they touched into gold.

It is well known that Greece borrowed all her civil and political institutions, her



knowledge in philosophy, and the sciences, from other countries; particularly Ægypt and Phœnicia. And yet what authors of those countries have come down to us containing their stores of knowledge? Would they not have been entirely lost to us, should we even know that they had ever flourished there, had it not been for the Greek language? Was it not by means of that alone that Greece enriched herself with the spoils of all nations, preserved the collected treasures of ages from corruption, and decay; and handed down the rich bequest to latest posterity?

Sir William Temple, in his Essay on antient and modern learning, does not scruple to affirm, that it is to the two languages of Greece and Rome we are indebted for all we have of learning, or antient records in the world; and that without them, the world in all these western parts would hardly have been known to have been above five or six hundred years old, nor any certainty remain of what passed in it before that time.

Must not the antients therefore have looked upon their language as their greatest

est treasure, which enabled them to hand down such blessings together with their own memories, to the end of time ; which at once furnished them with the means of acquiring and preserving knowlege, and of displaying it in the most beautiful and lasting colours ; which was the source of some of their highest delights and enjoyments, and one of the greatest excitements to virtue and praise-worthy deeds ? For what could more powerfully inflame men with the desire of performing glorious actions, than the certainty of the gratification of one of the strongest passions, the love of fame ; of having those actions blazoned to the world not only in their own times, but through all future generations ? And would not the motives be equally strong in the poets and historians, to record those actions ? Thus the hero, and the writer, mutually assisted each other in their flights ; not like the twin brothers, dividing their immortality, but always shining together, and mutually reflecting lustre on each other. What inducement could be so strong to writers upon any subject to labour at perfection,

or

or what could so effectually flatter and encourage them in their toilsome task, as the consideration that the materials with which they wrought were as durable as the world itself; which neither the rust of time could devour, nor the force of arms destroy? It was this which made Horace exultingly say,

‘Exegi monumentum ære perennius.’

And Ovid in the same strain,

‘Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira,  
‘nec ignis,

‘Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere  
‘vetustas.’

On the contrary, what discouragements must those writers lie under, who have only changeable and perishable materials to work upon? Whose fame is circumscribed as much in space as in time; confined to two islands in the one, to a century, or little more, in the other. Can we suppose that artists would take the same pains to finish carvings in wood, as in brass or marble? What Dr. Swift has said of our historians may be applied to our writers in general.

‘How

‘ How shall any man, who hath a ge-  
‘ nius for history, equal to the best of the  
‘ antients, be able to undertake such a  
‘ work with spirit and chearfulness, when  
‘ he considers, that he will be read with  
‘ pleasure but a very few years, and in an  
‘ age or two shall hardly be understood  
‘ without an interpreter ? This is like em-  
‘ ploying an excellent statuary to work  
‘ upon mouldring stone. Those who ap-  
‘ ply their studies to preserve the memory  
‘ of others, will always have some concern  
‘ for their own. And I believe it is for this  
‘ reason, that so few writers among us,  
‘ of any distinction, have turned their  
‘ thoughts to such a discouraging employ-  
‘ ment ; for the best English historian  
‘ must lie under this mortification, that  
‘ when his stile grows antiquated, he will  
‘ be only considered as a tedious relater of  
‘ facts ; and perhaps consulted in his turn,  
‘ among other neglected authors, to fur-  
‘ nish materials for some future collector.’

It was not then to superior knowlege,  
skill in sciences, or pre-eminence in virtue,  
that the Greeks and Romans owed the  
distinguished rank which they had ever



held above all other mortals; it was to their language alone, without which the highest degree of wisdom and virtue, are as evanescent as their possessors. It is by that only the souls of men acquire an immortality even in this world, as by that their ideas appear for ever in equal freshness, and operate with equal force, when their bodies are mixed with the common mass of matter. \* ‘ All other arts of perpetuating our ideas continue but a short time: statues can last but a few thousands of years, edifices fewer, and colours still fewer than edifices. Michael Angelo, Fontana, and Raphael, will hereafter be what Phidias, Vitruvius, and Apelles are at present, the names of great statuaries, architects, and painters, whose works are lost. The circumstance which gives authors an advantage above all these great masters, is this, that they can multiply their originals; or rather can make copies of their works to what number they please, which shall be as valuable as the originals themselves.’

† Spect, No 166.

The ingenious author of the above passage has put this matter into the following beautiful light. ‘ Aristotle tells us, that

‘ the world is a copy or transcript of those  
 ‘ ideas which are in the mind of the  
 ‘ first Being; and that those ideas which  
 ‘ are in the mind of man, are a transcript  
 ‘ of the world: to this we may add,  
 ‘ that words are the transcript of those  
 ‘ ideas which are in the mind of man, and  
 ‘ that writing or printing are the transcript of words.

‘ As the supreme Being has expressed,  
 ‘ and as it were printed his ideas in the  
 ‘ creation, men express their ideas in  
 ‘ books, which by this great invention of  
 ‘ these latter ages, may last as long as the  
 ‘ sun, and moon, and perish only in the  
 ‘ general wreck of nature. Thus Cowley  
 ‘ in his poem on the resurrection, mentioning the destruction of the universe,  
 ‘ has those admirable lines:

‘ Now all the wide extended sky,  
 ‘ And all th’ harmonious worlds on high,  
 ‘ And Virgil’s sacred work shall die.’ }

Ought it not therefore to be the first care of a nation that is ambitious to distinguish

guish itself in the world, to cultivate and refine their language, and reduce it to a certain standard ; by which alone a perfect transcript of all the great geniuses born amongst them can be preserved, to be a perpetual ornament and support to the state, to furnish precepts and models to all future generations ? It is true, that there are but few countries in the world, however they may be desirous of it, or whatever pains they may take to compass it, which can attain this inestimable blessing. The original construction of their language often renders it impracticable, and where this is not the case, other causes interfere. The diamond alone will bear that high polish which gives it it's superlative lustre, and extraordinary value ; and yet before the art of polishing it was discovered, the diamond itself was of no higher estimation than common pebbles. It is certain, that out of the great variety of languages spoken by the infinite number of nations with which this globe has been peopled, only two have arrived at such a pitch of perfection, as to survive those who spoke them, so as to be a necessary part of the study

study of all such as had leisure to apply themselves to books, and would gain the reputation of being learned. To the perfection of these languages there was a concurrence of causes, which perhaps had never met before or since in any age, or country, *Great Britain alone excepted*. If therefore it can be shewn, that all the favourable circumstances which conspired to the refinement and establishment of theirs, are rather more strong with us; that the means are equally in our power of rendering it as perfect, as extensive, and as durable as theirs; would it not be the greatest absurdity in us to forego a point thro' want of a little pains, which would be attended with such immediate advantage and pleasure to us? And would it not be an unpardonable omission in us to neglect transmitting to our successors the noblest legacy we could bequeath?

Let us examine therefore by what means those two languages arrived at their high degree of perfection, and see whether those means are not equally in our power, and would not in all probability be equally effectual with us.



## C H A P. II.

*That the perfection of the Greek and Roman languages was chiefly owing to the study and practice of oratory.*

THERE cannot be a stronger presumptive proof of this, than is at once offered to our view, when we consider that these were the only nations upon earth who ever studied oratory as an art, and that these were the only two who brought their language to perfection. But in regard to the Roman language we can give a more absolute proof, as the refinement of that can be assigned to no other cause. From the time of Romulus to the days of Scipio, it was perpetually varying, as much as the English has done in an equal space; so that at any given period, the language written two centuries before was not intelligible but to antiquarians, till after the Greek rhetoricians had introduced the study of eloquence. At that time their language was still rude, uncultivated, and barbarous; yet in less than four-

fourſcore years from the introduction of that ſtudy, it arrived at the pitch of perfection in which we find it in the Ciceronian age; and which was perhaps incapable of improvement. The Greek indeed is harder to be traced to it's ſource, as neither books nor hiſtory afford us ſufficient lights into the times previous to it's perfection; the oldeſt authentick book handed down to us being that of Homer; ſo that we can form no judgement how long the language had been poliſhed before his time. But even from his writings we may eaſily ſee, that oratory had flouriſhed long before his days, and may therefore with the higheſt probability aſſign it to the ſame cauſe. Cicero ſays, ' Homer would not have beſtowed ſuch  
' praiſes upon Ulyſſes and Neſtor for their  
' eloquence, even at the time of the Trojan war, one of whom he deſcribes as  
' a nervous, the other as a perſuaſive  
' ſpeaker, if eloquence had not even at  
' that time been in high repute. Nor  
' could the poet himſelf otherwiſe have  
' produced ſuch finiſhed ſpeeches, and  
' appeared ſo plainly the orator.'

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When it is considered that the states of Greece consisted for the most part of republics, who were led and governed by the public speakers, it must be allowed that the practice of oratory was almost coeval with the states, and consequently that it must have been the chief means of refining their language. Language being the principal weapon of the orator, it was more immediately his concern that it should be well tempered and polished, and made fit for use. This will be made more evident upon a view of the points which are essential to its perfection. When language is considered as the transcript of our ideas, the more perfect a language is, the more exact will the transcript be. Language is composed of words. In words two things are to be considered, sense and sound. The sense regards the intellectual faculty only, as they are arbitrary marks by which the ideas of one mind are communicated to another. Their sound regards alone the sensitive faculty of hearing, thro' which they are communicated. The sense may therefore be considered as the soul of words, the sound as the body. And

as in life to make a perfect man, there must be the '*Mens sana in corpore sano*,' the same is also requisite to the perfection of language. In both cases the strong and graceful structure of the body, the perfect use of the members, and the aptitude and vigour of the organs, are necessary to display the intellect in it's full force and beauty. When language is considered in regard to the sense of words, two points are necessary; precision, and copiousness. Precision, that the same words may raise the same ideas in the minds of the hearers, as are in that of the speaker, otherwise he would not be understood. Copiousness, that every idea of the mind may have it's mark, otherwise a perfect transcript of it could not be made. Considered in regard to sound, there are also two points of chief moment, distinction, and agreeableness. Distinction, that one word thro' a similitude of sound may not be mistaken for another, which would confound the sense; agreeableness, that attention may be kept up by the pleasure of hearing, which other-



wise might grow weary, and in any length of time be disgusted, as the operation in itself is painful. When language is considered in this light, to whom are all these points so necessary as to the orator? To be well understood, and heard with delight, are essential to him. This could not be unless the words he used excited the same ideas in the minds of his hearers, and unless the sounds of which they were composed, were agreeable to the ear. Perhaps it may be said, that these are as necessary to the poets and other writers, as to the orators. To such as recited their works I grant it would, for in that instance they apply to the art of oratory. But in regard to such whose works are submitted to the eyes of readers, the argument will not hold good. To prove which, amongst many others that might be offered, the following plain reasons will be sufficient. In the first place, clearness is not so absolutely necessary to the writer; for let his language be ever so obscure, his reader may stop, and take what time he pleases to find out his meaning;

ing ; whereas it is necessary to the orator that his hearer should be able to accompany him, and that what he says should be understood in the same space of time that it is uttered. Nor is agreeableness of sound so necessary to the writer as to the speaker, as that is generally submitted to a sense which cannot judge of it. The eye can look without pain at many hard uncouth combinations of syllables and words, which the tongue could not pronounce without difficulty, and which would consequently be disagreeable to the ear. As therefore we must suppose that all the men of the greatest genius and abilities which Greece produced, were necessarily interested, and employed, in improving, refining, and establishing their language, we need not wonder that it was soon brought to perfection, and that it lasted with hardly any variation for more than a thousand years, from Homer to Plutarch, and how long before we know not. One argument to prove the point set forth in the head of this chapter ought not to be omitted, that in Athens, where eloquence and oratory were

most studied, they were allowed also to speak the purest and correctest language of all Greece.

### CHAP. III.

*That the Greek and Roman languages owed their stability and permanence to oratory. With some animadversions upon the neglect of studying the English language.*

THE same means which brought these languages to a state of perfection, were also necessary to preserve them in that state. As the practice of orators had introduced the study of language, which was the cause of it's refinement, so when it was refined to the utmost, the necessity of continuing the study of language was greater than before. For the taste of the people being now much improved, by constantly hearing such as spoke in the most pure and perfect manner, would immediately be sensible of the least deviation from what was right, and be offended at any improper tone, or use of words in their publick

lick speakers. There are many instances recorded of their great delicacy in this respect. The story of the old Athenian herb-woman and Theophrastus is well known. ‘ That old woman called Theophrastus (a man in general remarkable for elocution) a stranger, only on account of observing in him too nice an exactness in the pronounciation of a single word ; and being asked her reason, said she had no other, but that he spoke too Attically.’ Cicero says of the Athenians in general, *Atticorum aures teretes & religiosæ*. He shews also that the Romans in his time were as nice, when he says, ‘ that in the repetition of a verse the whole theatre was in an uproar, if there was one syllable too many or too few in it. Not that the crowd was at all acquainted with the quantity of poetick feet, or had any notion of numbers ; nor could they tell what it was which gave them offence, or why, or in what respect it was a fault.’ Whence could this arise but from that general good taste infused into them by being habituated to hear nothing but what was pure and cor-



rect? and how much pains must have been taken by such as intended to speak in publick, with respect to pronounciation, when the least deviation from propriety would be perceived by the meanest of the people? Accordingly we find, that after the care of their morals, this was the principal object of attention in the education of youth, whose chief employment was the study of their own language. The Greeks studied only their own, and consequently had much labour saved. The Romans studied the Greek, but it was chiefly with a view to improvement in the knowlege of their own, which had ever the preference with them, and employed the greatest part of their time. They took such care with respect to pronounciation that it extended even to their choice of nurses and servants, who were to be about them in their infant age. What shall we say then to our practice, so contrary to that of those polished nations, which we admire so much, and pretend to emulate; who take great pains in studying all languages but our own? Who are very nice and curious in our choice of preceptors for  
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the antient and modern tongues, yet suffer our children to be vitiated in the very first principles of our own, by committing them to the care of some of the most ignorant and lowest of mankind. Is it because that the knowledge of our language is so easily acquired, that it can scarce be missed? This surely can not be said, when it is universally allowed, that there are hardly any who speak or write it correctly. Is it because we have less use for it than any other? Can that be supposed, when it is the only one used upon all important as well as common occasions of life? When we consider that after the Greek and Roman languages were brought to a standard of perfection, when their youth had the advantage of established invariable rules upon which to found their knowledge; of able preceptors to instruct and guide them; of the noblest examples and most perfect patterns for their imitation; that with all these aids they still found it necessary to apply a great portion of their time in their more adult years, to make themselves masters of it; shall we who have none of these advantages, without  
any

any pains or application expect to have a competent knowlege of one, which in it's present state is far more difficult to be learned than theirs ? This omission in our education is the more wonderful, whether we consider the great importance of the point to the state in general, or it's universal use to all the individuals who compose it. Mr. Locke has represented and complained of this defect in the strongest terms.

‘ To write and speak correctly, gives a  
‘ grace, and gains a favourable attention  
‘ to what one has to say : and since 'tis  
‘ English that an English gentleman will  
‘ have constant use of, that is the lan-  
‘ guage he should chiefly cultivate, and  
‘ wherein most care should be taken to  
‘ polish and perfect his stile. To speak  
‘ or write better Latin than English, may  
‘ make a man be talked of, but he will  
‘ find it more to his purpose, to express  
‘ himself well in his own tongue, that  
‘ he uses every moment, than to have the  
‘ vain commendation of others for a very  
‘ insignificant quality. This I find uni-  
‘ versally neglected, nor no care taken  
‘ any

‘ any where to improve young men in  
‘ their own language, that they may tho-  
‘ roughly understand and be masters of  
‘ it. If any one among us have a faci-  
‘ lity or purity more than ordinary in his  
‘ mother tongue, it is owing to chance,  
‘ or his genius, or any thing, rather than  
‘ his education, or any care of his teacher.  
‘ To mind what English his pupil speaks  
‘ or writes, is below the dignity of one  
‘ bred up amongst Greek and Latin, tho’  
‘ he have but little of them himself.  
‘ These are the learned languages fit only  
‘ for learned men to meddle with and  
‘ teach ; English is the language of illi-  
‘ terate vulgar : tho’ yet we see the po-  
‘ lity of some of our neighbours hath not  
‘ thought it beneath the publick care to  
‘ promote and reward the improvement  
‘ of their own language. Polishing and  
‘ enriching their tongue is no small busi-  
‘ ness amongst them ; it hath colleges and  
‘ stipends appointed it, and there is raised  
‘ amongst them a great ambition and emu-  
‘ lation of writing correctly : and we see  
‘ what they are come to by it, and how  
‘ far



‘ far they have spread one of the worst  
‘ languages possibly in this part of the  
‘ world, if we look upon it as it was in  
‘ some few reigns backwards, whatever  
‘ it be now. The great men among the  
‘ Romans were daily exercising them-  
‘ selves in their own language; and we find  
‘ yet upon record, the names of orators,  
‘ who taught some of their emperors La-  
‘ tin, tho’ it were their mother tongue.

‘ ’Tis plain the Greeks were yet more  
‘ nice in theirs; all other speech was bar-  
‘ barous to them but their own, and no  
‘ foreign language appears to have been  
‘ studied or valued amongst that learned  
‘ and acute people; tho’ it be past doubt  
‘ that they borrowed their learning and  
‘ philosophy from abroad.

‘ I am not here speaking against Greek  
‘ and Latin; I think they ought to be  
‘ studied, and the Latin at least under-  
‘ stood well by every gentleman. But  
‘ whatever foreign languages a young man  
‘ meddles with (and the more he knows  
‘ the better) that which he should criti-  
‘ cally study, and labour to get a facility,  
‘ clearness, and elegance to express him-  
‘ self

‘ self in, should be his own, and to this  
 ‘ purpose he should daily be exercised  
 ‘ in it.’

In another place he says, ‘ There can  
 ‘ scarce be a greater defect in a gentleman,  
 ‘ than not to express himself well either in  
 ‘ writing or speaking. But yet I think, I  
 ‘ may ask my reader, whether he doth not  
 ‘ know a great many, who live upon their  
 ‘ estates, and so, with the name, should  
 ‘ have the qualities of gentlemen, who  
 ‘ can not so much as tell a story as they  
 ‘ should, much less speak clearly, and  
 ‘ persuasively in any business. This I  
 ‘ think not to be so much their fault as  
 ‘ the fault of their education ; for I must  
 ‘ without partiality do my countrymen  
 ‘ this right, that where they apply them-  
 ‘ selves, I see none of their neighbours  
 ‘ outgo them. They have been taught rhe-  
 ‘ torick, but yet never taught how to ex-  
 ‘ press themselves handsomely with their  
 ‘ tongues or pens in the language they are  
 ‘ always to use ; as if the names of the fi-  
 ‘ gures that embellished the discourses of  
 ‘ those who understood the art of speaking,  
 ‘ were the very art and skill of speaking  
 well.

• well. This, as all other things of practice, is to be learned not by a few or a great many rules given, but by exercise, and application, according to good rules, or rather patterns, 'till habits are got, and a facility of doing it well.'

Mr. Addison has many passages wherein he lays open, and laments this defect; and it is one of bishop Berkley's quære's, 'Whether half the learning and study of these kingdoms is not useless, for want of a proper delivery, and pronounciation, being taught in our schools and colleges?' Indeed there is not any one of the least understanding, who has either wrote or spoke upon this subject, that has not allowed this shameful neglect of our own language to be one of the greatest of our national evils. Is it not therefore astonishing that no remedy has hitherto been thought of? Would it be credited, were it not warranted by fact, that a polished and rational people should be at great expence of labour, time, and money, to have their children instructed in languages which never can be of any use to them in life, and seldom even contribute to their  
plea-

pleasure ; whilst they neglect entirely to have them instructed in one which would be of perpetual use or ornament to them, in whatever rank or station they were placed, upon matters of the highest importance, as well as the common occurrences of life ; and which might be a principal means of procuring them profit and promotion ? It may be said by some, that being our mother tongue, we have no occasion to learn it by rule, and that without study, we shall of course acquire a sufficient knowledge of it. But is this assertion warranted by experience ? If the contrary be true ; if it must be allowed that people are almost universally deficient both in understanding and speaking it, the argument for studying it will be so much the stronger on account of it's being a mother tongue. Because if it be generally ill spoken, it will not be possible but that boys in their childhood, and youths as they go more abroad into the world, must habitually fall into errors, and contract bad customs, which can be remedied by nothing but study and application. Whereas there is no such danger in any  
of



of the other languages, when learned from the mouth of a judicious and skilful master. There are few schools in these realms which may not bear testimony to the truth of this; for in those it is a common observation, that boys are often able to write exercises in pure and correct Latin, who at the same time can not express their thoughts with the least grace or propriety in their own language.

Indeed it might astonish any one to think, that we should still persist in so gross an error, who has not sufficiently weighed the force of fashion, or considered the difficulty of making any alteration in national customs \* when they have been once established. It may therefore be worth while to trace this defect to it's original, by which we may perceive, that tho' our ancestors were wise in chusing the method of education which they established in their days, as best suited to the circumstances of the times, yet we are very

\* Whoever has a mind to see the power of custom fully displayed, and the fatal consequences resulting from it, in our present method of education, may turn to a beautiful poem on that subject, written by Gilbert West, Esq; and to be found in the 4th vol. of Doddsley's Collection.

unwise in persevering in the same system without variation, when times and circumstances are so much changed. The true way of imitating the wisdom of our forefathers is, not to tread exactly in their steps, and to do the same things in the same manner; but to act in such a way as we might with reason suppose they would, did they live in these days. and things were so situated as they are at present.

## C H A P. IV.

*Causes of the neglect hitherto of studying the English language.*

**T**HE time of establishing a general system of education in England, was not till the reformation was first begun. Previous to that, our schools and colleges were chiefly for the use of those destined to the function of the priesthood, and what little knowledge and learning were in the kingdom, seem to have been pretty much monopolized by that order. The laity were in general so illiterate, that many

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even of the nobility and gentry could neither read nor write. The language was then so rude and barbarous, that few books were written in it which were either fit for entertainment or use ; consequently there could be no inducements to the study of it. At the same time it was so subject to change, that what was spoke in one century could not be understood in another. Infomuch that the history of persons and times must have come down to us in a very maimed and imperfect manner, had not the records been preserved in the Latin of the monks ; which however mangled and deformed it might be when compared with it's beautiful original, yet had still the advantage over the modern tongues, of stability ; and was of course fitter for preserving and transmitting events to posterity. It must be remembered that not long previous to this period of time, the arts and sciences had revived in Europe, and the Greek and Roman languages began to be taught in their purity. This was owing to the inundation of Barbarians, and Turks, which had overrun Greece, whose dispersed inhabitants

ants furnished all the countries in Europe with masters. The liberal arts, and the two learned languages, were welcomed in all places as illustrious strangers; they were treated at courts with high marks of distinction, and the pope, Francis the first, Charles the fifth, and Henry the eighth, vied with each other in the encouragement which they gave them. As these languages were the repositories of all the knowledge and wisdom of antiquity, no wonder they were made the chief object of education. It was by the study of these alone, that knowledge could then be acquired. There were as yet few or no translations into our language of the Greek and Roman authors; and indeed it was so very defective, that it was not capable of giving any just or satisfactory idea of them. Beside this, there were at that time many other motives and inducements to the general study of those languages, both of necessity and use, which do not hold now. After the writings of Luther and Calvin had appeared, all Europe was embroiled in religious disputes, in which we were necessarily



farily involved by our secession from the church of Rome. None of the modern languages were sufficiently refined or fixed to become of general use. As it was necessary to the several combatants of the different nations, that some one language understood by all should be pitched upon, in which they should manage their disputes, the Latin was chosen by common consent, and obtained a general currency. On this account that language was then spoke and written by all the learned in Europe, with as much fluency and facility as the polite now speak or write French. A knowledge of the Greek was also necessary, as the new testament, which contained the subjects of controversy, and furnished them chiefly with materials to support it, was written in that language. As the interests and passions of princes and of parties mingled themselves in these contests, men of the greatest abilities and most distinguished talents, were of course favoured and encouraged by them to be champions in the cause which they espoused. The roads to the temples of fame and fortune were not passable then, without first going thro'

thro' Greek and Latin; so that all who had either in view, must necessarily pass thro' those, whatever expence of time or labour it might cost them. As these religious controversies were the main objects of view in the state at that time, so in the mode of education they seem to have been chiefly considered. After the two languages, logick and metaphysicks were the principal studies, to make them able disputants, to assist them in unravelling fallacies, or in perplexing and confounding their opponents. The laity being just freed from the tyrannical power exercised over their minds by the clergy, which was chiefly supported by an opinion of superior knowlege and learning in that order, were now resolved not to be behind-hand with them in those points, and therefore greedily embraced the same method of education. Thus it happened that all persons whatever, designed for professions ever so different, ecclesiastical, civil, or military, the pulpit, senate-house, bar, physick, or army, were all trained exactly in one and the same way. To understand, speak, and write Latin well, as the

language by which they could acquire most knowledge, and which would be of the greatest use to them in life, was of course the universal study; whilst their own, which on account of it's poverty could only serve them in common offices, was little regarded. This general attention to Greek and Latin, as it was founded on reason and the necessity of the times, so was it also productive of the best consequences in regard to the English language; for without having that particular point in view, all the learned were daily and imperceptibly improving and enriching their own by words and phrases borrowed from those two excellent languages, and habitually made that which was before wild and anomalous, conform to the regularity and order of those, as much as it's genius and particular construction would admit. What a mighty progress was made in this respect during the reign of queen Elizabeth, may be seen by comparing the authors of that time with those who preceded them. That this was entirely owing to their skill in the learned languages, may be shewn  
by

by observing that there are no traces of the English having been particularly studied, or made part of education during her reign. Nor was there any society of men either of publick or private institution, whose office it might be to examine and fix rules to our language. That wise princess knew that the time was not yet come for such a work. It had not yet arrived at it's maturity; and to attempt before that, to fix it to a standard, might effectually stop it's growth. She therefore judiciously chose to give all manner of encouragement to the study of the learned languages, by which it was nourished and supported, and daily grew in size and strength. Had her successors taken as much pains to give stability to our language, as she did to bring it to perfection, it might at this day even vie with those of antiquity, and far excel any now spoke in the world. For want of this, it is the opinion of one † whose authority must be of great weight, (as no man hath perhaps more closely studied the point, none certainly hath written more correct-

† Dr. Swift's letter to the lord high treasurer.



ly) that our language has suffered as many corruptions since her time, as it has received improvement. The passage being curious and to the point, I shall here set it down, ‘ The period wherein the  
‘ English tongue received most improve-  
‘ ment, I take to commence with the be-  
‘ ginning of queen Elizabeth’s reign, and  
‘ to conclude with the great rebellion in  
‘ forty-two. It is true, there was a very  
‘ ill taste both of style and wit, which  
‘ prevailed under king James the first;  
‘ but that seems to have been corrected  
‘ in the first years of his successor; who,  
‘ among many other qualifications of an  
‘ excellent prince, was a great patron of  
‘ learning. From that great rebellion to  
‘ this present time, I am apt to doubt  
‘ whether the corruptions in our language  
‘ have not, at least, equalled the refine-  
‘ ments of it, and these corruptions very  
‘ few of the best authors in our age have  
‘ wholly escaped. During the usurpa-  
‘ tion, such an infusion of enthusiastick  
‘ jargon prevailed in every writing, as was  
‘ not shaken off in many years after. To  
‘ this succeeded that licentiousness which  
‘ entered

‘ entered with the restoration ; and from  
‘ infecting our religion and morals, fell  
‘ to corrupt our language : which last  
‘ was not like to be much improved by  
‘ those, who at that time made up the  
‘ court of king Charles the second ; ei-  
‘ ther such who had followed him in his  
‘ banishment, or who had been altoge-  
‘ ther conversant in the dialect of those  
‘ fanatick times ; or young men, who had  
‘ been educated in the same company ;  
‘ so that the court, which used to be the  
‘ standard of propriety, and correctness of  
‘ speech, was then, and I think hath ever  
‘ since continued, the worst school in  
‘ England for that accomplishment ; and  
‘ so will remain, until better care be  
‘ taken in the education of our young  
‘ nobility.’

It may be matter of wonder, that whilst  
the other countries in Europe, the French,  
Italians, Spaniards, &c. &c. in proportion  
to their progress in learning, after having  
enriched and illustrated their several lan-  
guages by the aids and lights borrowed  
from the Greek and Roman, were em-  
ployed with the utmost industry, to refine,

cor-

correct, and ascertain them by fixed and stated rules, the English alone left theirs to the power of chance and caprice ; in-  
somuch that it is but within a few months that even a dictionary has been produced here. Whilst in all the others, many excellent grammars and dictionaries have long since been published, the labours of publick societies, as well as of private persons. This is the more astonishing, when it is considered that such a work seemed to be of more absolute necessity to us, than to any other nation, and that on many accounts. In the first place, after the separation from the church of Rome, our own language alone was used in all acts of publick worship ; whereas in the Roman Catholick countries, all prayers and religious ceremonies were in Latin. From the nature of our constitution we had more constant occasion for the publick use of it in debates, and consequently stronger inducements to the study of it. Add to this, that there were three different nations, the Scotch, Irish, and Welch, who made up a considerable part of the British dominions, both in  
power

power and extent, who spoke in tongues different from the English, and who were far from being firmly united with them in inclinations, and of course were pursuing different interests. To accomplish an entire union with these people, was of the utmost importance to them, to which nothing could have more effectually contributed, than the universality of one common language. And it is obvious enough that this could not be brought about, unless the language were established upon certain principles, and made capable of being taught by rule. Add to this, that even in England itself, for want of such a method, there were such various dialects spoke, that persons born and bred in different and distant shires, could scarce any more understand each others speech, than they could that of a foreigner, which is notorious even now. It may therefore be worth while to enquire how a point of such importance, contrary to the practice of the antient, and example of modern nations, came to be so wholly neglected by us even to this day.

As



As this work was not begun in the reign of Q. Elizabeth, when the language had made the most vigorous shoots, it was hardly a thing to be wished in the time of her successor, as the taint of pedantry had infected every thing which regarded knowlege, or discourse. The violent commotions and civil wars, which raged during the greatest part of the reign of Charles the first, rendered all attempts that way impracticable; tho' otherwise that would have been the most auspicious æra for setting about such a task, as that prince was a great encourager of the arts and sciences. During the usurpation, such an inundation of cant and jargon had overwhelmed our language, as gave but little prospect of it's rising again. On the restoration however, all might have been amended; but from the dissolute manners and universal corruption in the reign of Charles the second, there could be no expectation that any useful scheme for the publick benefit should take place. The short period of his successor's government was too full of troubles and commotions; and at the time of the revolution,  
and

and during king William's reign, the minds of men were too much taken up in establishing our noble constitution, and their attention too much engaged by the wars waged for the preservation of the liberties of Europe, to give heed to any other matters, however important in themselves. The first proposal, that we know of, for an attempt of that kind, was made by Dr. Swift, towards the latter end of queen Anne's reign, in a letter to the lord high treasurer. And it is generally thought that the scheme would certainly have been reduced to practice, had it not been for the sudden death of that princess, soon after the publication of that piece. Let others enquire into the causes why it has ever since lain dormant; it is sufficient to my purpose to say, that hitherto no attempt has been made towards the regulation of our language, which like our commons is suffered to lie desolate, uncultivated, and waste, to the great prejudice, in point of wealth, as well as ornament, of this fair island.

## CHAP. V.

*That those causes no longer operate, nor are of any force. The great necessity of studying our language shewn.*

THE motives which induced our ancestors, upon the first establishment of a general system of education, to lay such a stress upon the study of Latin and Greek, and to dedicate such a vast portion of time to the acquisition of skill in those languages, are no longer of any force. There is neither the same necessity to spur us now, nor the same advantages to induce us to such a close application to those, whether we consider the general utility resulting from them to the publick, or the private emoluments to individuals. The learned languages are no longer the sole repositories of knowledge; on the contrary, the English is become a universal magazine not only of antient, but of all modern wisdom. All the great authors of antiquity, as well as of the present times, of whatever nation,

tion, or in whatever language, may now be read in English; tho' not perhaps with equal delight, yet with equal advantage in point of knowlege. So that the laity need no longer be afraid of the clergy in that respect, even tho' they were entirely to give up to them the superior toil and labour of reading the originals. Add to this, that we have had since those days, many excellent writers of our own, upon subjects of much more importance to us than any that have been handed down to us in the books of antiquity, and which were untouched by them. Not to mention that even in regard to those works calculated to give delight, and from which they claim their chief pre-eminence, there have not been wanting in this country, men of perhaps as great reach of fancy, and genius, whose writings, if they were as much studied, and whose beauties (paradoxical as the opinion may seem) if they were as well understood, as those of the admired antients, might perhaps afford as much pleasure, and in no respect yield the palm to them. The publick contests in regard to religion, wherein all



the able pens of the several nations of Europe were engaged, and in which the disputes were carried on in Latin, have long since ceased; and it is more than a century since we have been embroiled in civil contests with various sects at home, wherein the controversy has been entirely managed in English. So that however necessary to promotion, and distinction, skill in Latin might formerly have been to a clergyman, of late years knowlege of the English language would be much more conducive to those points. Besides, the language itself has been so much enlarged and improved since those days, that it is rendered capable of answering every end, whether of profit or pleasure, to us at least, better than all the others put together, and consequently is become more worthy to be studied. To state the account in short between our forefathers and us, they shewed great wisdom and good sense in making the learned languages the chief study in their days, because, however round about the way, knowlege was then to be acquired in none other; and because our own, then  
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poor and uncultivated, could be no other way enriched or refined. Private persons were in the right to labour at perfection in those, because, beside the knowlege which they could not otherwise have obtained, they were sure of meeting suitable rewards in point of reputation and fortune. But the very same motives which urged them so powerfully to apply to Latin and Greek, are now more cogent with us to study chiefly our own language. Because a greater quantity of useful knowlege can with more ease and less time be acquired in that than in any, I had almost said all the others: and because the soil is now so luxuriant that it requires more than ordinary cultivation and tillage, in order to produce useful and profitable crops, instead of being over-run with gawdy flowers, and noxious weeds. And as to individuals, it need scarce be mentioned that no skill in other languages can contribute in any degree, either to their fame or profit, so much as in their own. If these points are true, what cause can be assigned that we still proceed in the old method? Is it a blind veneration paid to the institutions

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and customs of old ? Upon the same principle we might just as reasonably meet our enemies in the same sort of armour as was worn by our countrymen before the invention of guns. But customs, of which the immediate absurdity or detriment are at once seen and felt, upon change of circumstances, are easily and necessarily altered ; whereas those, the ill consequences of which lie more remote, and the bad effects whereof are not sensibly perceived 'till after a number of years have rolled away, are often suffered to remain, 'till time gives them fast root, and age sanctifies them. Their duration becomes an argument of their goodness, and people instead of weighing their intrinsic merit in the scale of reason, are apt at once to form a conclusion that they could not have lasted so long had they not been right. If it were not for this sort of prepossession, how is it possible to account for the absurd notions of so many parents, that Greek and Latin are still the high roads to fortune, because they were so two centuries ago, notwithstanding the many flagrant instances to the contrary before their eyes ? How many

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excellent scholars, now pining in want, make no other use of their Latin, but to lament in Virgilian strains, that ever they were acquainted with Virgil, or knew any other but their mother tongue? With what sorrow do they look back upon their past time irretrievably mispent, tho' not thro' their own fault, and wish it had been employed in learning some trade by which they might be sure of acquiring a comfortable subsistence? But indeed in many cases this may not be the effect of choice, or prejudice, but of necessity. Numbers there are who see the absurdity of this conduct, but can find no remedy. They have not the means of giving their sons such an education as they could wish, and therefore are obliged to follow the reigning mode. Nor can it be doubted, that if the means of acquiring skill in the English were as easy and common, if it could be taught by as certain rules, and the preceptors were as knowing in that as in the learned languages, infinitely a greater number would apply themselves to a critical study of that, both from



views of interest and inclination, than to the others.

That I may not be misunderstood here, I shall set down part of a passage, tho' quoted before, from Mr. Locke, as being at once fully expressive of, and at the same time giving a sanction to my own sentiments.

' I am not here speaking against Greek and Latin; I think they ought to be studied, and the Latin, at least, understood well by every gentleman. But whatever foreign languages a young man meddles with (and the more he knows the better) that which he should critically study, and labour to get a facility, clearness, and elegancy to express himself in, should be his own, and to this purpose he should daily be exercised in it.'

Far be it from me indeed to depreciate the study of those languages, of the Latin at least, which may be of signal use in making us understand our own with greater accuracy. But the great fault complained of is, that this important end seems to be entirely forgotten, thro' a spirit of pedantry in the teachers; by whom instructions  
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in Greek and Latin are given, as if they were desirable only for their own sakes. Whereas, were their uses constantly pointed out to them towards illustrating their own language, young gentlemen would not only go thro' those laborious studies with more immediate delight to themselves, but would ever after in life endeavour to keep up and improve what skill they had acquired in those, as greatly contributing to so useful a purpose. By a contrary practice, it is well known, that very few through a disgust conceived at what appears to them an unprofitable toil, ever arrive at sufficient perfection in those languages to read the antient authors with ease and pleasure in the original, and therefore when their necessary course is over, they lay them totally aside, and in a few years entirely forget what little they had acquired. If they continue to read, it is only in books written in English, with the principles of which being totally unacquainted, they form their notions of style upon such authors as happen to please them most. In the choice of which, the mat-

ter whereof they treat, not the manner in which it is handled, is chiefly considered. \* ' Too many of this sort pass upon  
' vulgar readers for great authors and men  
' of profound thought, not on account of  
' any superiority either in sense or style,  
' both which they possess in a very moderate degree, nor of any discoveries  
' they have made in arts and sciences,  
' which they seem to be little acquainted with : but purely because they  
' flatter the passions of corrupt men, who  
' are pleased to have the clamours of  
' conscience silenced, and those great  
' points of the christian religion made  
' suspected, which with-held them from  
' many views of pleasure and interest, or  
' made them uneasy in the commission of  
' them.' The same argument will hold in regard to writings upon any other subjects, which flatter the passions, please the humours, or fall in with the party-notions of men ; and this alone is sufficient to account for the general bad taste which is allowed to prevail, as well as the quantity

\* Bishop of Cloyne.

of false knowledge, far worse than none ; for that amazing number of wretched pamphlets, written to the times as the phrase is, which are daily published, and daily find a sufficient number of as wretched readers ; in short, for those heaps of trash which are constantly exposed to sale in the windows of booksellers, like unripe fruit greedily devoured by green-sickness appetites, and which fill the mind with crudities as pernicious to the understanding, as those of the other are to the body. Of the great increase of this evil Dr. Swift complained many years ago in a letter to the author of the Tatler. † ‘ I can not  
‘ but observe to you, that until of late  
‘ years a Grub-street book was always  
‘ bound in sheep-skin, with suitable print  
‘ and paper ; the price never above a shil-  
‘ ling ; and taken off wholly by common  
‘ tradesmen, or country pedlars. But now  
‘ they appear in all sizes and shapes, and in  
‘ all places : they are handed about from  
‘ lapfuls in every coffee-house to persons of  
‘ quality ; are shewn in Westminster-hall,

† Numb. 230.



‘ and the court of Requests. You may see  
‘ them gilt, and in royal paper, of five  
‘ or six hundred pages, and rated accord-  
‘ ingly. I would engage to furnish you  
‘ with a catalogue of English books, pub-  
‘ lished within the compass of seven years  
‘ past, which at the first hand would cost  
‘ you an hundred pounds, wherein you  
‘ shall not be able to find ten lines to-  
‘ gether of common grammar or com-  
‘ mon sense.’ It must be allowed, that if  
English were studied, and commonly well  
understood, and that consequently a ge-  
neral good taste prevailed amongst readers,  
none of those miserable productions could  
meet with a sufficient sale, and they would  
therefore be stifled in their birth. If a  
correct style should once become a neces-  
sary requisite to the success of any book  
which may be offered to the publick,  
what an army of able-bodied writers must  
then be obliged to lay down the pen,  
who instead of corrupting the hearts and  
poisoning the understandings of their fel-  
low subjects, would become useful mem-  
bers of society by carrying muskets against  
the enemies of their country.

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If it be granted that at this day English is the language most universally read by Englishmen; that even by those who have made the greatest progress in Latin and Greek, the number of books read in their own is out of all proportion greater than in the learned languages; that the principal view in reading those, or other authors in foreign tongues, is amusement, whilst our own are chiefly studied for useful purposes; it must be allowed, that nothing can be a greater national concern than the care of our language. There is such an intimate connection between ideas and words, language and knowledge, that whatever deficiency, or fault, there may be in the one, necessarily affects the other. Clearness, or confusion of ideas, arise from obscurity or precision in their marks, and the quantity, as well as certainty of knowledge, depends upon the ease and exactness with which a language is read or understood. If the glass be not right, the images reflected by it will not be exact. If the channel be muddy, the stream which flows thro' it can not be clear; if there lie heaps of rubbish in it, the water can

can not pass swiftly, or smoothly. Should it therefore be the case of any country, that an infinite number of books were read there, and very little knowledge obtained; that there should be much speaking, and little understanding; that disputes upon all manner of topics should be carried on both in conversation, and writing, without ever coming to an end; it would not follow that the intellectual faculties of such a people were inferior to others, as the whole might easily be solved by considering the state of their language. So far as that is obscure or ill understood, so far must the knowledge acquired in it be confused or erroneous. This is at once seen by any person who reads in a foreign language, as he can not pretend to understand any author in that, without first knowing the precise meaning of his words and phrases; to obtain which, he is obliged to close application and study; wherein he is assisted by certain and stated rules. But it has been before observed, that in a mother tongue, where we have no rules to guide us, whose use and knowledge are obtained from the people we  
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usually converse with, or the books we usually read, we are much more liable to fall into errors than in any other, and consequently in that have much more occasion for study and application. When it is considered, that a single term in a proposition not understood exactly in the same manner, tho' perhaps very nearly, by two different persons, may furnish out matter of dispute to run thro' many volumes, and to last for ages; and when it is considered, what little care is taken to come at an accurate knowlege of a language, the most copious, and on many other accounts the most difficult to be well understood of any in the known world; there will be no occasion to wonder that we should be the most unsettled in our notions, and the most divided in our opinions of any people, since the time of the separation of philosophy from the study of rhetorick, amongst the Greeks. It is well known, that the destruction of all useful knowlege soon followed that separation amongst them, and it is to be feared, that the restoration of it amongst us can be effected no other way than by their reunion.

Seneca



Seneca attributes the corruptions which had crept into the style and language of the Romans in his days, to a decay of knowlege. May not the converse proposition be true in regard to us, that our want of knowlege is chiefly owing to the neglect of studying our language? and the corruptions of our understanding to those of our style? Are not our minds chiefly stored with ideas by words, and must not clearness or obscurity in the one, necessarily produce the same in the other? The only remedy that could be effectual in this case, he said, was to cure the mind. When that was sound and strong, the discourse would consequently be so too. But must not the mind be cured, and reason strengthened by the medium of language? It is from the mind, says he, that all our sentiments and words proceed. But must not the sentiments come out cloathed in words according to the conception had of them when admitted? However just his reasoning may be in regard to the Romans, yet it will not hold in regard to us, unless our language were in

an equal state of perfection, and established upon as solid principles, as theirs. There is a great difference between persons who thro' wantonness, or caprice, wander from the way, yet have always the right road open to them whenever they recover from their infatuation; and those who may find themselves in an error, and wish to correct it, but have no clue to guide them to what is right.

The difficulty of writing with clearness and accuracy in our language, can appear from nothing more strongly than this, that it seems generally allowed by those of the greatest discernment, and who have most considered the point, that out of the infinite number who have published their works, we have but very few who have written pure and correct English. And they who were well acquainted with Dr. Swift, must have often heard him say, that the exactness of his style was the chief study and labour of his life. How must such difficulty and constant attention check the progress of those possessed of the most elevated genius, and what noble productions may they not have been the occasion

sion of losing to the world. \* The artist would make but a slow progress, were he obliged himself to provide and prepare all his materials; but when they are ready to his hand, he can dispatch a great deal in a little time, and with ease. Nor is it to be doubted, that if they had been early trained and instructed in their own language, so as to acquire a habit of writing it with correctness and facility, when they first thought of publishing, but that even our most eminent authors would have left behind them works far superior both in quantity and quality to what they are at present. So that we may safely say with Dr. Swift, in his letter to the lord high treasurer, ' That nothing would be of  
' greater use towards the improvement of  
' knowlege and politeness, than some ef-  
' fectual method for correcting, enlarg-  
' ing, and ascertaining our language.'

It is certain, that nothing could more effectually contribute to the benefit and

\* The less restraint a poet's imagination suffers from the mechanical part of his work, the more his fancy is capable of taking it's flight. The less it is confined, the more liberty it has for invention.

Du Bois, Crit. Ref. vol. i. c. 35.

glory of this country, than to bring the English language to as great a degree of perfection, stability, and general use, as those of Greece and Rome. In order to see whether this be practicable or not, I shall hereafter consider it with relation to the Roman language only, as well to avoid fruitless repetitions (since all arguments conclusive with respect to the one, will be equally so in regard to the other) as because we have a more distinct knowledge of the rise and progress of the Roman, than of the Greek, as well as the means by which it was brought to it's maturity. First then, as to it's perfection: I shall endeavour to shew that the means to arrive at it are equally in our power, that our inducements are stronger, and that we might in all probability compass the end in a shorter space of time, and with less labour than they did. Secondly, as to stability: That if our language were once brought to a standard, we have more powerful and certain means to fix and preserve it in it's state of perfection than they had. Thirdly, as to  
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general use : That we have it more in our power than they had to propagate our language, and make it universal.

## C H A P. VI.

*That the means to arrive at perfection in our language are equally in our power, that our inducements to it are stronger, and that we might in all probability compass our end in a shorter space of time, and with less labour, than the Romans did.*

**I**T has been already shewn, that the means by which the Roman language was improved, and arrived at it's state of perfection, were the study and practice of rhetorick, and oratory. An attention to those necessarily produced an attention to language. The power of words, whether in regard to sense or sound, became a point of essential consideration to those who were to speak in publick. To assist them in their progress, the Romans had the benefit of the precepts and example of the Greeks. But in this respect we have rather the advantage, since we have theirs

theirs also added to those of Greece. It may be presumed that from the writings of Aristotle, Plutarch, Longinus, Cicero, and Quintilian, a better treatise of rhetoric might be compiled now, than any which was in use amongst the Romans, at least previous to the time that their language had arrived at perfection. It is true, that the Greek rhetoricians did not a little contribute to the progress of their pupils, by joining example to precept, in an art which above all others requires to be learned immediately from the mouth of a master. But if the same encouragement were now given, it is not to be doubted but that many masters would soon arise, equally well qualified with them, both as instructors, and models for imitation.

That the inducements to the study of oratory, and consequently of language, are more powerful with us than with the Romans, may be easily seen, by considering that there is not a single point in which it was useful or necessary to them, wherein it is not equally so to us. But there is one article, wherein it's utility is beyond all degrees of comparison greater and more

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extensive than in all the rest, which is peculiar to us, I mean the article of religion.

That we might in all probability bring our language to a state of perfection in a much shorter space of time, and with less labour and difficulty, than the Romans did theirs, may be judged by a comparative view of the state of theirs, at the period when the introduction of the study of eloquence first engaged them in that task, with ours as it stands at present. It must be observed, that at that juncture the Roman language was far from having arrived at a state of maturity ; it was weak, and poor, and was gradually strengthened and enriched by what it borrowed by little and little from the Grecian stores. Whereas ours has long since arrived at it's full size, and is copious even to exuberance. They were obliged to wait the slow growth of the tree ; but ours has long since borne fruit, and is likely to become barren only thro' the luxuriance of the branches. It is apparent enough how much less time it requires to prune away what is superfluous, than to wait the gradual increase of  
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of what is useful. Besides, they had then no books written in Latin that could be of any great assistance to them. If the judgement of Horace is to be relied on, even the best authors of those times wrote in a very coarse inelegant style. On which account scarce any of them have been handed down to us, except some of the works of Plautus. And we know in what estimation \* his writings, as well as those of his contemporaries, were held in the Augustan age. Ennius, Pacuvius, &c. are known to us only by name. Whereas we have in our language at present, several works which may at once serve as rules to guide us in our enquiries, and standards to fix our knowledge when attained. The learned and ingenious author of our English dictionary has delivered it as his opinion, that † ‘ From the  
 ‘ authors which rose in the time of Eliza-  
 ‘ beth, a speech might be formed adequate  
 ‘ to all the purposes of use and elegance.

\* At nostri prævi Plautinos & numeros &  
 Laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque,  
 Ne dicam stulte, mirati. HORAT.

† Preface to Johnson's dictionary.



‘ If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation, from Raleigh; the dialect of poetry and fiction from Spenser and Sidney; and the diction of common life from Shakespear; few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of English words, in which they might be expressed.’ To this we may add, that as models of style, Milton in the poetick, and Shakespear in the dramatick; Swift, Addison, Dryden, and Sir William Temple (in some of his works) in prose, may be considered as truly classical, as the Virgil, Cæsar, Tully and Sallust of the Romans; nor is there any reason that they should not be handed down as such equally to the end of time, unless by abandoning our language entirely to the fantastical caprices of novelty, it should come to be so changed and metamorphosed, as that they shall be as little understood, and read with as little pleasure, two or three centuries hence, as the preceding authors of that date are now by us. At which time per-

perhaps some scribbler of the day may be employed to modernize them ; by passing thro' whose filtering stone, they may indeed be made more clear, but must entirely lose their spirit. And who knows but that if a total ignorance of the force and harmony of numbers should be suffered to continue, and the vile Gothick taste for rhyme should increase, but that some future versifier shall be rewarded, and obtain universal praise, for chiming the divine numbers of Paradise lost, and fitting them to the vitiated ears of the age. Nor will this seem an improbable conjecture, when we consider with what pleasure, at this day, the fiery Pegasus of Homer is beheld in trammels, ambling along in a shuffling pace, to the jingle of his silver bells.

## CHAP. VII.

*That if our language were once brought to a standard, we have more powerful and certain means to fix and preserve it in it's state of perfection, than they had.*

THE stability of language may be considered in regard to two points, pronunciation, and meaning. To the first it is necessary that the same words should always be founded in the same manner; to the last, that they should be always understood in the same sense. The use of speech is chiefly instrumental to the former, of books to the latter. The more universally therefore a language is well and uniformly spoken by any people, the more likely it is to acquire permanence as to pronunciation: the greater number of correct authors there are in it, who agree in the use of words, and the more generally they are read, the greater prospect is there of giving it stability as to meaning. To consider these two points separately. First, as to sound. To make  
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a language universally and uniformly well spoken by any people, it is necessary that the pronunciation should be formed upon known invariable rules, and that the customary speech should be conformable to those rules. For as the bulk of the people cannot be supposed to be acquainted with those, custom must in that case, as well as in most others, supply in them the want of knowledge. Both these points were admirably provided for amongst the Romans. They did not leave the sound of their language to chance or caprice, it was established upon rational and certain rules, to which all their publick speakers conformed. This uniformity of pronunciation in their orators necessarily diffused a general good taste through their hearers, which supplied the place of rules; and at the same time furnished them with a sure criterion, by which they might discover any impropriety in the sound of words. For being accustomed to hear their words always sounded in the same manner, they would be immediately sensible of the least alteration, and the being new, was a sufficient mark to them



of the pronunciation's being vitious. It is impossible to conceive a more immovable standard to language, considered in regard to sound only, or a stronger bulwark against innovations, than this was. For when the laws of pronunciation were once established by the orators, upon certain and rational principles, it was no longer in their power to break thro' them: on the contrary, they were obliged to a more strict and exact observation of the rules than any others, and from thenceforth were compelled to follow custom, not choice †. For what publick speaker in his senses would venture thro' an affectation of novelty, to expose himself to the censure or ridicule of the meanest of his hearers? Thus the body of the people became the guardians of their language, as well as their liberties, and it is observable that they both fell together. Nor is this at all wonderful, or without it's foundation in reason. For tho' the multitude have not understanding to form po-

† In dicendo autem vitium vel maximum est a vulgari genere orationis, atque a consuetudine communis sensus abhorrere. Cic. de Orat. l. i.

litical systems, or fix rules to languages; nay tho' they are incapable of knowing or comprehending their fitness after they are established, yet they will be always found their true and natural supports, and it is by them alone that either the one or the other can be preserved, or destroyed. However ingenuity and design may be the property of the few, labour and execution depend upon the many. Reason and law may be the province of one, but strength and custom belong to the other.

It was to the frequent opportunities they had of hearing their publick speakers, that the Romans were indebted for their general exactness of pronunciation; from which also resulted it's fixed state. Now if we compare our opportunities with theirs, it will at once appear, that in this respect the advantage lies greatly on our side. For beside those of the senate-house, bar, &c. which we have in common with them, our churches furnish one of more frequent, regular, and general use, than all the others. These are daily open to all ranks and orders, and it is part of the duty

duty of every person in the nation to attend divine service at least one day in the week. If therefore the pronunciation of our language were fixed by certain rules, and were uniformly and invariably observed by all the clergy ; if they had also an equal power with the orators of old of captivating attention, and charming the ear, is it to be doubted but that a general good taste, and exactness of speech, would be diffused thro' the whole people, proportionably superior to the Romans, as our advantages and opportunities would be greater and more frequent ? This must be allowed, unless the people of this country are inferior to them both in sensitive and intellectual faculties ; a point which will hardly be granted.

Now to consider language with respect to it's meaning. It will not require much pains to prove, that we have it in our power to establish that as certainly, and more universally than the Romans had. Here it is to be observed, that the intellectual faculty is chiefly concerned, whereas pronunciation is obtained only thro' the sense of hearing. By the invention of writ-

writing the meaning of words can be conveyed to the mind as perfectly by the eye, as thro' the ear. And that method which gives the greatest room and most time for the understanding to exert itself, will bid the fairest for procuring the greatest accuracy in the knowlege of words. There can be no doubt therefore that this is to be acquired more perfectly, and with more certainty, by study, and books, than by conversation, and publick harangues; for this plain reason, that in the one case a man commands his own time, and can appropriate as much of it as he thinks proper, to weigh the force of every word; in the other, his understanding is obliged to keep pace with the speaker. In this respect, the invention of printing has given us an amazing advantage over the antients. As their books were all transcribed, their number of copies could not be so easily multiplied, nor consequently fall into so many hands. And the expence of purchasing those written copies was so great, that most persons, except those of fortune, were in a manner precluded from the use of them. Accordingly we find  
that



that the people in general were wholly illiterate. Whereas amongst us, by means of the press, and the cheapness of books, there are hardly any so low who may not acquire knowledge by the eye, as well as thro' the ear. Hence it is manifest that skill in our own language might easily become more universal now, than it could in their days. And that it might in a much shorter space of time, with more ease, and equal certainty, be reduced to rules, and fixed to a standard, has been already shewn.

It is true that the two great articles, the pulpit, and the press, which give us such a vast superiority over the antients, may produce effects directly opposite to what we have been speaking of. The pulpit, which as it is the most general, ought to be the most fixed standard of pronunciation, may be made the chief source of diversity and corruption in point of sound. And the press, which might be the grand conduit of knowledge and clearness, may become the main channel of obscurity and confusion as to meaning. If the clergy, being entirely destitute of rule, should each of them find himself obliged to make  
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use of that mode of pronunciation which he has accidentally acquired, or which he prefers from fancy or caprice, we may hear English spoken in the churches in as many various dialects as there are shires in this island; and there may be as many singularities in particular words as there are individuals of that order. Nor can their example fail to have a strong influence upon the generality of their hearers. If the press should prove to be an easy passport to authors who do not understand the language they write in, but who from an art of flattering the passions, and humouring the vitious and depraved taste of the age, obtain great vogue, and are generally read, it will follow that the mind of the reader will necessarily be contaminated by any taints in the style of the admired writer; and that obscurity, and want of precision in the words of the one, will produce confusion and irregularity in the ideas of the other.

Indeed those two great instruments, as they are in a perpetual state of activity, must be continually doing good or harm to the state of knowlege. As their power

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extends itself over the whole realm, in-  
somuch that there is not an individual  
who is not in some measure influenced by  
it, the good or harm must be universal.  
If their movements were regulated by just  
and fixed rules, directed to proper ends,  
their operations would be uniform, and  
the best effects would follow. If they  
are left to the guidance of blind chance,  
nothing but confusion and disorder can  
ensue.

The Romans have afforded us a glaring  
example of this truth. For many ages  
was their language in a state of disorder  
and perpetual change, like ours: but  
when once they applied themselves to the  
study of it, and reduced it to rule, it was  
brought by means of it's regularity into  
that fixed state in which we now see it,  
and by means of which it was that we  
do now see it. If we do not apply to the  
same method, there can be nothing more  
evident than that ours must go on per-  
petually fluctuating, and there is the  
highest degree of probability to suppose  
that the changes made in it will be conti-  
nually for the worse. There would be

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no great difficulty in proving, that the structure of our language is at this day in a worse condition in regard to sound, than it was even in the time of Chaucer. And all who have written upon the point are agreed, that in every other respect it has been declining since the reign of Charles the first. Amongst many others, the testimony of Mr. Johnson must be of allowed authority on this occasion. \* So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as the wells of English unde- filed, as the pure sources of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from it's original Teutonick character, and deviating towards a Gallick structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it, by making our antient volumes the ground-work of style, admitting among the ad-

\* Pref. to Johnson's dict.

\* dition



‘ dition of later times, only such as may  
‘ supply real deficiencies, such as are rea-  
‘ dily adopted by the genius of our tongue,  
‘ and incorporate easily with our native  
‘ idioms.’

We have already taken a view of the rise and progress of the Roman language towards it's perfection ; let us now consider the causes of it's decline and corruption. From this enquiry we shall evidently perceive, that the operation of the same causes, jointly with others more powerful of our own, must necessarily make our language grow worse and worse, and in no very long space of time reduce it to an irretrievable state of corruption, unless some measures are speedily taken to establish it on a fixed and solid foundation. And at the same time it will appear, that if it were once fixed, the means of preserving it in that state are much more certain, and powerful, with us, than with them, and that it might last with little or no variation, at least as long as our constitution.

Seneca attributes the corruption of language in his days, to luxury, depravity  
of

of morals, affectation of singularity in the writers, prevalence of their example, and love of novelty. He has represented the abuse in such strong terms, and inveighed against the innovations introduced at that time with such force, that one would imagine he himself had entirely kept clear of them. And yet no one was a more remarkable instance of the contagious power of example, and the irresistible force of fashion, than this very man, as no one contributed more to alter and corrupt the Roman style than he himself. Rollin has shewn the sudden and general influence of example in the following manner. ‘ One single person of reputation sometimes, as Seneca observes, and he himself is an instance of it, who by his eminent qualifications shall have acquired the esteem of the publick, may suffice to introduce this bad taste, and corrupt style. Whilst moved by a secret ambition, a man of this character strives to distinguish himself from the rest of the orators and writers of his age, and to open a new path, where he thinks it better to march alone at the head of

R

‘ his

his new disciples, than follow at the heels of the old masters ; whilst he prefers the reputation of wit to that of solidity, pursues what is bright, rather than what is sound, and sets the marvellous before the natural and true ; whilst he chuses rather to apply to the fancy than the judgement, to dazzle reason than convince it, to surprize the hearer into an approbation rather than deserve it, and by a kind of delusion, and soft enchantment, carry off the admiration and applauses of superficial minds, (and such the multitude always are) other writers seduced by the charms of novelty, and the hopes of a like success, will suffer themselves insensibly to be hurried down the stream, and add strength to it by following it. And thus the old taste, tho' better in itself, shall give way to the new one without redress, which shall presently assume the force of a law, and draw a whole nation after it \*.

But if luxury, singularity, novelty, and example, had power to change the whole

\* How very apposite is the above paragraph to the writings of lord Shaftsbury, and those of Mons. Voltaire!

constitution of the Roman language, tho' fixed and established on such solid foundations, and by such certain rules, what havock must they not make with ours which is destitute of both; left like a ship without either anchor, or rudder, to be tost about perpetually the sport of every gale from fashion or caprice? And how much more speedily and universally must all alterations and corruptions, whether in sound, or sense, be propagated by means of the pulpit, and the press, whose powers are in a continual state of action, and pervade the whole land?

It may be said, that if a language so established, fixed by so perfect a standard, replete with such excellent models, could not be preserved from change and decay, to what purpose is it to take pains with ours, which in time must inevitably meet the same fate? But will any one ask this who has read Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Livy, and the other great authors of Rome? Tho' the prodigal and spendthrift successors of these great men, riotously and wantonly squandered away their language as well as the many other treasures be-



queathed to them by their frugal ancestors, yet they could only do it during their own lives; and whatever debts they themselves might have contracted to folly, their posterity could not be deprived of their estate in knowlege, so indissolubly entailed by the settlement of language. And shall we not endeavour to secure to future generations, entire and unchanged, their birthright in Shakespear, in Milton, in Addison, and Swift? Or shall we put it in the power of one giddy and profuse age to dissipate, or render of no value, the heaps of treasure now collected in the many excellent books written by English authors?

If the natural mutability of things were a sufficient argument to deter us from endeavouring to fix them, the same would hold good in regard to every thing else as well as to language, and we might sit down for ever in a state of inaction. Mr. Johnson has justly observed on this subject,  
 ‡ ‘ If the changes that we fear be thus ir-  
 ‘ resistible, what remains but to acquiesce  
 ‘ with silence, as in the other insurmount-

‡ Pref. to his dict.

‘ able

‘ able distresses of humanity? It remains  
‘ that we retard what we can not repel,  
‘ that we palliate what we can not cure.  
‘ Life may be lengthened by care, tho’  
‘ death can not be ultimately defeated :  
‘ tongues, like governments, have a natu-  
‘ ral tendency to degeneration ; we have  
‘ long preserved our constitution, let us  
‘ make some struggles for our language.’

But surely tho’ the consideration of the changeable and perishable nature of all other mortal works, might justly occasion despondence, yet such despondence would not be well founded with respect to language ; since that is the only sublunary thing from which men may expect perpetuity to their labours. Of this we have undeniable instances in the Greek and Roman authors ; and surely a desire of giving the same immortality to our own would not be irrational, and the attempt, however ineffectual, would be still laudable. Is it not to be wished, that in case any great revolution should hereafter wholly destroy our language in the same manner that theirs were, so as that it should be no longer spoken upon earth,

that the fair memorials of the many great men produced in this country, the noble model of our constitution, and the true spirit of liberty, far superior to the antients, which breathes in our writers, should be preserved for ever like theirs, in our books, in the masterly drawing and lively colours of the originals? May not this be the means of perpetuating the British constitution either here or in some other country to the end of time? Had not the noble authors of antiquity come down to us, we should hardly have been able to frame so perfect an idea of liberty, or to have enjoyed the invaluable blessings it bestows. And should it be in the fate of things, that the long-laboured fabrick of our constitution, the work of ages, should in time moulder away, and tumble to the ground, or be destroyed by violence; who knows in what regions of the earth the noble edifice may again and again be raised, should the beautiful model be preserved entire in the works of our writers? But to leave these speculative points, and come to what is more useful

If

If it could be made appear probable, that were our language once fixed upon just and certain rules, it would in all likelihood continue in the same state, at least as long as our constitution remained, sure no one would think any pains too great to accomplish so desirable a point. Let it be remembered, that the Roman speech and style continued invariably pure from the date of their perfection, 'till there was an alteration in their government; and that the changes and corruptions introduced into their language and writings, were not 'till some time after the people had lost their liberties. This will in a great measure serve to confirm the hypothesis above laid down, that the stability of their language was chiefly, if not entirely, owing to the general good taste acquired by the people from constantly hearing their orators. For upon the change of the republick into a monarchy, oratory was banished, or only the shadow of it remained. The people no longer accustomed to hear their speech correctly spoken in publick, lost their distinguishing faculty, their sole criterion of propriety;



and the few persons who did harangue at stated times, no longer restrained to rules by the awe of the people, gave a loose to fancy, and affected whatever pronunciation pleased them most. In this, those who were most admired were most followed. Thus their speech was no longer uniform, but different modes were introduced at different times, and obtained vogue in proportion to the reputation of those who gave rise to them. If therefore a general good taste in the people was the surest preservative of sound, and pronunciation, it has been already shewn, that we have better opportunities of diffusing such a general taste than the Romans had, provided our pronunciation were once established by rules. I shall now endeavour to shew upon the same principle, that in regard to the sense of words, and accuracy of style, we have also much more powerful means to preserve them in a fixed state, were they once brought to it.

Whatever exactness or delicacy the Roman people in general might have arrived at in point of speech, yet they could know little or nothing of their written lan-

language, and could therefore be but incompetent judges of the stile of their authors. To obtain skill in that, reading and an application to books were necessary ; but from the very manner in which those books were propagated, the copies must have been scarce and dear, and consequently only read by the few. In this respect therefore the security of the continuance of their written language in it's state of perfection, was not so great as of that which was spoken. But the case is different with us. The press has opened as wide an avenue to knowlege thro' the eye, as thro' the ear ; and people now may be as universally benefited by reading, as by discourse. Thus our style in writing having the same common broad bottom for it's basis with our speech, might be more secure of standing than that of the antients. But as the pyramid, which of all buildings is the most firm and durable, if reversed, is the most liable to fall ; so the very instrument which might contribute most to the refinement and establishment of our language, if wrongly applied, may be the sure means of it's corruption

ruption and change. As the press is in constant action, it must constantly diffuse either a good or bad taste thro' the people. If they have no rules to guide them, their judgements, governed by chance or fancy, will consequently be erroneous; and however evidently so they may be, in time they must be established, and by custom

(Quem penes arbitrium & jus & norma loquendi)

obtain the force of a law. Venal and needy writers, whose view is profit, will of course conform to the reigning taste, as the most likely way to obtain sale for their works; and they who are actuated by nobler motives, will be allured by the charms of present fame. Even the judicious few, finding their endeavours vain to stem it, will suffer themselves to be carried away by the torrent. This is the great source of the corruptions in our language; \* \* And these corruptions very few of the best authors in our age have wholly escaped.' If Seneca with all his discernment, his knowlege, and fine taste,

\* Swift.

could

could not resist the force of fashion, but fell himself into the very faults against which he so violently declaimed, and that in a language so regulated, so fixed, what are we to expect from our writers in one as yet unsettled, unascertained? The Romans had one tolerable security for the preservation of their style, from the high price of their books; so that no works were likely to meet with many purchasers, but such as were of reputation. Or if any innovations were begun in those in the time of the republick, they were not of course adopted into their speech, since the people in general, who were the guardians of that, knew little or nothing of the writings, and would not easily bear any new modes in their orators. But with us a wide communication is opened between the two channels; the streams are blended, and whatever taint there is in the one, of course infects the other. We see daily that new phrases and words are adopted from writings into discourse, and from discourse into writings. Since therefore the people in general must be ultimately the regulators of our language, at



least in it's most essential points, it mainly imports us that they should be properly qualified for so important an office. If they must all be taught to read, it were to be wished they were also taught to understand. Whilst they are committed to the care of the most ignorant masters, and receive the first rudiments of language in the very worst books that can be found, is it to be hoped that they should acquire more knowlege than their teachers, or have a notion of style different from the models which have been presented to them? If they were well instructed, and were made acquainted with none but good patterns, there can be no doubt but as general a good taste would prevail amongst them in regard to written language, as did amongst the Romans with respect to that which was spoken. The consequence of which general good taste would be, that no books, which were not written in a good stile, would now find any sale; as no orator could then make his way, who did not speak with propriety. And if this were the case, it is incredible what a number of fountains  
from

from which flow ignorance and folly, vice and impiety, would at once be dried up, and disappear. But this can never be 'till the preceptors have a system of well-digested rules, to guide themselves as well as their pupils in the course of their instructions. 'Till that happens the propagation of reading is but the propagation of error, and the press must continue to be the source of ignorance, and false taste.

I shall close this chapter with observing that we have one great advantage over the antients, which is, that so long at least as our religion continues unaltered, we have one sure barrier against a total change of our language. This is set forth by Dr. Swift in his letter to lord Oxford, where he says, ‘ It is your lordship’s observation, that if it were not for the bible  
‘ and common-prayer-book in the vulgar  
‘ tongue, we should hardly be able to  
‘ understand any thing that was written  
‘ among us a hundred years ago; which  
‘ is certainly true: for those books being  
‘ perpetually read in churches, have proved  
‘ a kind of standard for language,  
‘ espe-

‘ especially to the common people.’ And this might be made a more certain, general, and durable criterion of words, than any the Romans had, not only in point of sound and pronunciation, but also of sense and meaning.

## C H A P. VIII.

*That we have it more in our power to propagate our language in other countries, and make it universal, than they had.*

AS the chief glory of a people arises from their authors, the propagation of their language is necessary to the displaying of that glory in it's full lustre, which otherwise would be unknown in other regions, or dimly seen as thro' a cloud. Of the propagation of a language there are chiefly three causes; conquest, commerce, and the number of useful or entertaining books which are written in it. Of these, the first has hitherto proved ineffectual. The victor may change the laws and customs of a country, but he will find it difficult, if not impossible, to make

make a total change in their language. The use of their native speech is the last thing which the vanquished would willingly part with, and next to their thoughts, is what the conqueror has the least power over. The attempt would prove impracticable with regard to a present race, the chief of whom are too old to learn a new tongue; and indeed all endeavours to establish it in a rising generation, have naturally ended in a sort of compromise, a mixture of the two, from which resulted a new one. From this source may be derived almost all the various languages now spoken in Europe. Commerce in itself is but a very inadequate cause of spreading language, both as a very small knowledge of it will suffice for the carrying on business, and as in this case it would be confined only to the mercantile part of other countries. Besides, this too is apt to give rise to a new jargon, composed out of the respective tongues of the nations which trade with each other. But a constant commerce naturally excites curiosity to be acquainted with the history, customs, and manners, of the people with



with whom it is carried on, which can not be obtained in a satisfactory manner without understanding their language. In this respect Great Britain has not only an infinite advantage over Rome, but in proportion to the extent of her trade, over all other countries in the world. For if by common consent of all nations a language were to be pitched upon which should be of universal use in point of traffick, the suffrages of course would fall, *cæteris paribus*, upon that spoken by the people who carried on the largest and most extensive trade with the rest of the world. That the English therefore is hardly known abroad, and the French so universally, can not be attributed to that cause, unless they are allowed to exceed us in that point. To the propagation of a language, it is necessary that they who are inclined to it, may learn it with ease and certainty; but this it is impossible to do without the use of rules. The French have very wisely with great pains and labour regulated and fixed their tongue; so that foreigners of all countries may with proper pains acquire even an accu-

accurate skill in it both as to sound and sense. Whereas a total neglect on the part of the English, in those respects, has rendered it impossible to strangers either to pronounce or understand it with any degree of propriety or certainty. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering how few even of the natives have any great knowledge of either. And the difficulty of learning it abroad, may be judged from the very small progress made in it by foreigners who reside for years amongst us; many of whom pass great part of their lives, and take immense pains, without attaining even a tolerable knowledge of it. If the question be asked, why the English above all other European languages is so hard to be attained, the answer is ready, that it is the only one not yet reduced to rule. And this is the true reason that, notwithstanding our universal commerce, it is so little known abroad, except to a few of the curious; and it is from a contrary proceeding that the French has obtained a general currency. It may be worth the consideration of politicians, whether this may not in time give them

a superiority in trade, as it may be a strong inducement to most people, where other respects are equal, to give the preference to those whose speech they understand, and with whom they can converse with ease.

But the great cause of spreading a language, and which makes it most sought after, is the number of useful or delightful books which are written in it. Of these the latter too has the preference. For writings merely of use, when well translated, lose nothing of their intrinsic value: but poems, and elegant compositions in prose, which are chiefly calculated to give pleasure, must lose the greatest part of their beauty in another language, as that consists chiefly in the harmony resulting from the arrangement of words, and a peculiar grace and force of phraseology. Translations, to works of this sort, are like prints to pictures; they can only shew the design, but the masterly strokes and expression are but faintly imitated, and the colouring entirely lost. But if the spreading of books in the originals in other countries, and the number

ber of their readers, were to be the test of the excellence of their writers, France would certainly bear away the palm, not only from Great Britain, but from Athens and Rome. For one reader which Sophocles, Euripides, Terence, and Horace have found in any country in Europe, their Corneille, Racine, Moliere, and Boileau, have met with twenty. Whilst the English authors of the greatest eminence are known in most even by name but to a few; and their works like rare manuscripts are only to be found in the libraries of the curious. Is it because that their writers and language are really superior to ours? The contrary may be asserted without fearing any imputation of prejudice. No, it is because they are read, and understood with ease. Where pleasure is the end, the means to come at it must not be too laborious. The delight in reading the best authors must be diminished in proportion to the difficulty of understanding them. The French have made a highway thro' their part of Parnassus, in which the ease wherewith the traveller jogs along, gives him a higher relish for the



beauties around him; and many places, like objects on a road, become remarkable, only by their being there, which otherwise might never be heard of. Whereas we, who must be allowed to possess the more lovely part of the hill, whether considered in regard to it's natural or improved beauties, by suffering the way to be almost impassable, have rendered it unfrequented. To what other cause can it be assigned (not to enter into any comparison of the dead, which would be wandering into too wide a field) that the name of Voltaire is so familiar to all the mouths of Europe, whilst those of Aken-side or Mason are scarce ever heard but from English tongues?

It will perhaps be allowed, that if the English language were as well and as universally known in Europe, as the French, it would soon obtain the preference. And in that case it must also be allowed, that it would obtain a more general use than ever the Roman did even in it's most flourishing state, as this has been already effected by the French. That this advantage which the moderns  
have

have over the antients is chiefly owing to the invention of printing, is a point too obvious to be insisted on.

## C H A P. IX.

*Whether our language be capable of a sufficient degree of perfection to make the study of it general, and to afford as good a prospect of it's duration as the Latin.*

**I**T may be said, that if agreeableness of sound, and the charm of numbers, be so useful to the propagation, and so necessary to the permanence of a language ; ours being far inferior in it's own nature to the Roman in those respects, and not equal to some of the modern, must have a much less chance of being sought after by the present times, or of being handed down to future ages : that if the utmost pains were taken to polish it, it would only be like cutting a pebble after the fashion of a diamond, which may make a shew indeed, and have some lustre, but being of no intrinick value, will not bear a price, nor interest people much in

it's preservation. This opinion seems to have been too hastily adopted by most writers upon this subject. Upon a fair enquiry it might perhaps appear, that they have judged too superficially, and mistaken a bad habit of body, occasioned by humours, the effect of indolence and intemperance, for original defects in the constitution. If the stamina be strong, and the vitals untouched, all disorders may be removed by proper remedies. But to examine the constitution of our language, would be to enter upon a topic too extensive for the nature of this work. I shall therefore only throw together some thoughts upon our poetick style, considered with relation to that of the Roman, and of the modern tongues. In which I shall endeavour to shew, that upon the whole we are not inferior to the antients, and have an undoubted superiority over all the moderns, from the very genius and constitution of our language.

In the poetick style two things are to be considered, expression, and harmony. The first regards the choice and arrangement of words considered as signs of our ideas:

ideas: the last, their election and disposition with respect to their sound only, without reference to their meaning. To expression, copiousness and energy are necessary; in the first of which our language is perhaps superior to all others, in the last may yield to none. And the only complaint in regard to either is what Mr. Johnson has justly made, the want of regulation. He says in the preface to his dictionary, ‘ When I took the first survey  
 ‘ of my undertaking, I found our speech  
 ‘ copious without order, and energetick  
 ‘ without rules: wherever I turned my  
 ‘ view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated.’ In point of harmony indeed, it seems to be taken for granted, that our language is far inferior to the antients, and not equal to some of the modern tongues. But upon examination it will appear that this opinion is founded upon the corruption of language by our writers, rather than any original defect in itself. At first view the Roman seems to have a vast superiority over ours in it’s very construction, from which results a natural fitness in it’s words



to form harmonious combinations, as well as in the regulations established to give that natural fitness it's full force. The first great advantage which it has over ours arises from it's original construction; wherein the different cases, genders, and numbers of their nouns, as well as moods and tenses of their verbs, are all expressed by changes of termination in their words. From this two good consequences followed; one, that their language was freed from that multitude of monosyllables with which ours is necessarily crowded, in order to mark those variations; the other, that the final syllables, which leave the strongest impression on the ear, being no longer left to chance, were settled by established rules, so as to form the greatest diversity, as well as agreeableness of sound. The second great advantage arose from the unlimited privilege given to their writers to transpose their words at pleasure, and to range them in whatever order they thought proper, so as to form the most agreeable cadence. But if it should appear in regard to the first, that the original formation of their language only fitted

it

it for the particular measures and numbers which they used, and that ours is equally well adapted to those which we use; if it should appear also that our measures and numbers have upon the whole a superiority over theirs; will not this seeming advantage at once vanish? As to the second, tho' the restraint laid upon our writers by the necessity of following the natural order of words may make it more difficult for them to form an harmonious combination; yet when that is obtained, there can be no doubt but that the intuitive clearness with which the understanding perceives the meaning of the words, by means of that natural order, must leave it more disengaged to attend to the numbers, and consequently give them an additional lustre.

That what I have advanced in relation to numbers may appear in a clear light, it will not be amiss to take a comparative view of the Latin heroick measure, as that is the chief, with the English. It might easily be proved from the specifick differences of the two languages, that they require different measures, and that the

hexa-

hexameter of the Latins is best suited to the genius of their tongue, as blank verse is to ours. But this at present would take up too much time unnecessarily. It is sufficient to my purpose that such has been the practice of the best writers in both; and whoever has the least doubt whether this practice has its foundation in reason, may soon be convinced that the Latin hexameter is not suited to our tongue, by looking over the attempts made in that way by Sidney, and others; whose verses of that sort seem to move with a ridiculous and burlesque air, instead of that state and majesty which we admire in the Roman poets. He would also be immediately sensible how ill adapted Latin words are to English blank verse, should he endeavour to fit them to that measure. The Latin heroick line consists of six feet, the English but of five. This at first view gives the former the pre-eminence over the latter in point of size, and when we come to examine their movements, in point of stateliness also. Nor can there be any doubt that if the mere structure of the verses were alone to be considered, with-

without reference to their use, but that the former would have evident advantages over the latter. But when they come to be examined with relation to their fitness to go thro' a long work, the latter will have a manifest superiority. To prove this it need only be shewn, that the Latin heroick admits but of two movements, the dactyl, and spondee: whereas the English admits of eight, the spondee, the trochee, the iambus, pyrrichius, dactyl, anapæst, tribrachus, and amphi-brachus. Hence we may see what an infinite advantage the latter has over the former in point of variety, and consequently of expression and harmony; which are the primary, as mere sound and melody are only the secondary qualities of numbers. So that granting their language to be composed of words more sonorous and agreeable to the ear, yet as their verse can have but two movements, it is impossible to vary those in such a manner, but in works of any length a great sameness of cadence must be perceived, for which no richness of sound can compensate. Now if what is here said of the  
Eng-



English measure be true, it is apparent from the use of eight movements, that a skilful poet may in the longest performance throw an almost infinite variety of numbers into his verses, and consequently never cloy the ear. If the Romans had but two bells, and we have seven, tho' theirs might be composed of a finer metal, and their tone be much superior, yet whoever listened for any length of time, would find himself much more delighted by the various changes rung upon the one, than by the mere pleasure of sound in the other.

I know it will at once be said, that my reasonings upon this head must of course fall to the ground, as they are built upon a false hypothesis. And yet, however universally the contrary notion may have prevailed, there is not any thing more demonstrably true than what I have advanced, in regard to the movements of which an English heroick verse may be composed. But as common received opinions, grown inveterate by time, are not easily to be rooted out, it will require a particular treatise to set this whole matter right,  
and

and to lay open the theory of English numbers, which at present seem to be enveloped with a general darkness. Lest the reader should too hastily pronounce upon what I have already advanced, I would have him ask himself this question, ‘ Am I acquainted with the principles of English poetick measure, or do I know what it is which constitutes an heroick verse ?’ If he finds himself at a loss, he can not be certain but that what I have set down may be true. If he goes by the common rule, that is indubitably false. It is generally received that an English heroick line consists of ten syllables, whereas nothing is more certain than that many, and those very harmonious, are composed of eleven, twelve, thirteen, nay even fourteen syllables. But the consideration of these matters would carry me too far out of the way. It will however be immediately to my purpose to trace the source of the erroneous opinions so generally spread in regard to this point, as it will at the same time lay open one of the chief causes of the corruption of our language.

No-

Nothing has contributed so much to destroy all true taste for poetry as the establishment of rhyme. A foolish admiration of this trifling and artificial ornament, has turned people's thoughts from the contemplation of the real and natural beauty of numbers. Like the Israelites, we have gone a whoring after our own fancies, and worshipped this idol with so insatuated a zeal, that our language has in a great measure fallen a sacrifice to it. Hear what a candid † Frenchman has ingenuously said upon this subject, notwithstanding that their tongue is incapable of any tolerable poetick measure without rhyme.

‘ There is no rule in poetry, whose ob-  
‘ servance costs so much trouble, and pro-  
‘ duces so few beauties in verse, as that of  
‘ rhiming. Rhime frequently maims, and  
‘ almost always enervates the sense of a dis-  
‘ course. For one bright thought which  
‘ the passion of rhiming throws in our  
‘ way by chance, it is certainly every day  
‘ the cause of a hundred others, which  
‘ people would blush to make use of, were  
‘ it not for the richness or novelty of the

† Du Bos, Crit. Ref. vol. i. c. 36.

‘ rhyme,

‘ rhyme, with which these thoughts are  
‘ attended.

‘ Some perhaps will say, that there  
‘ must certainly be a much greater beauty  
‘ in rhyme than I pretend to allow. The  
‘ consent of all nations (they will add) is  
‘ a sensible proof in favour of rhyme ;  
‘ the use of which is at present univer-  
‘ sally adopted.

‘ My answer is, in the first place, that I  
‘ do not contest the agreeableness of  
‘ rhyme ; I only look upon this agree-  
‘ ableness in a much inferior light to that  
‘ which arises from the numbers and har-  
‘ mony of verse, and which shews itself  
‘ continually during the metrical pronun-  
‘ ciation. Numbers and harmony are a  
‘ light which throws out a constant lustre,  
‘ but rhyme is a mere flash, which disap-  
‘ pears after having given only a short-  
‘ lived splendor. In fact, the richest  
‘ rhyme has but a transient effect. Were  
‘ we even to rate the value of verses only  
‘ by the difficulties that are to be sur-  
‘ mounted in the making them, it is less  
‘ difficult, without comparison, to rhyme  
‘ completely, than to compose numerous  
‘ and



‘ and harmonious verses. In aiming at  
‘ the latter, we meet with obstacles at  
‘ every word. Nothing extricates a French  
‘ poet out of these difficulties but his ge-  
‘ nius, his ear, and perseverance; for he  
‘ has no assistance to expect from any me-  
‘ thod hitherto reduced to art. These ob-  
‘ structions do not occur so frequently,  
‘ when a person proposes only to rhyme  
‘ well; and besides, in endeavouring to  
‘ surmount them, he meets with the assis-  
‘ tance of a dictionary of rhimes, that fa-  
‘ vourite book of all severe rhimers. For  
‘ let these gentlemen say what they will,  
‘ there are none of them but what have  
‘ this excellent work in their studies.

‘ Secondly, I grant that we rhyme all  
‘ our verses, and that our neighbours do  
‘ likewise most part of theirs. We find  
‘ the use of rhyme established even in Asia  
‘ and America. But the greatest part of  
‘ these people are barbarians; and the  
‘ rhiming nations that have been since  
‘ civilized, were barbarous and illiterate  
‘ when their poetry was first formed.  
‘ The languages they spoke were not suf-  
‘ ceptible of a greater perfection of verse,  
‘ when

‘ when they laid, as it were, the first foun-  
 ‘ dations of their poetry. True it is, that  
 ‘ the European nations here spoken of,  
 ‘ became in process of time a polite and  
 ‘ learned people. But as they polished  
 ‘ themselves not ’till a long time after they  
 ‘ had been formed into a body politick,  
 ‘ and as their national customs were al-  
 ‘ ready settled, and even strengthened by  
 ‘ the length of time they had been stand-  
 ‘ ing, when these nations received the im-  
 ‘ provements arising from a judicious cul-  
 ‘ ture of the Greek and Latin tongues;  
 ‘ those customs have only been polished  
 ‘ and mended, but could never be entirely  
 ‘ altered. An architect, who has under-  
 ‘ taken to repair an old Gothick building,  
 ‘ may make some alterations to render it  
 ‘ more commodious, but he can not alter  
 ‘ the defects which arise from the first  
 ‘ construction. He can not shape it into a  
 ‘ regular building without pulling down  
 ‘ the old one, in order to erect a new edi-  
 ‘ fice upon a different plan.

‘ Rhime, as well as fiefs and duels,  
 ‘ owes it’s origin to the barbarousness of  
 ‘ our ancestors. The people from whom

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‘ the

‘ the modern nations are descended, and  
‘ who subverted the Roman empire, had  
‘ already their poets, tho’ barbarians,  
‘ when they first settled in Gaul and other  
‘ provinces of the empire. As the lan-  
‘ guages in which these ignorant poets  
‘ wrote, were not sufficiently improved to  
‘ bear handling according to the rules of  
‘ metre, nor even admitted of attempting  
‘ it, they fancied there would be some or-  
‘ nament in terminating with the same  
‘ sound, two consecutive or relative parts  
‘ of a discourse, both of which were to  
‘ be of an equal extent. This identity of  
‘ final sounds, repeated at the end of a  
‘ certain number of syllables, formed a  
‘ kind of grace, and seemed to express, or  
‘ did, if you please, express something of  
‘ a cadence in verse. Thus it was, in all  
‘ probability, that rhyme first rose and  
‘ established itself in Europe.’

Here we have a full picture of rhyme  
presented to us, together with the history of  
it’s rise and progress; the legitimate off-  
spring of barbarism and necessity, nursed  
by ignorance. However untoward it’s  
prospects might be from the circum-

stances of it's birth and nurture, yet in time it has arrived at such a degree of strength and power, as to invade the possessions of harmony and numbers in the regions of poetry, the genuine children of knowlege and politeness, which it has entirely subdued, and reduced them to a state of slavery, and a blind obedience to it's absolute authority. The barbarism of it's origin can not be doubted, since it has ever been found amongst the most rude and savage nations, but was not even known to the more polished and refined. Nor can we be to seek from what stock it comes, when we see that it is so congenial with all the tongues derived from the Gothick root, that in those it is considered as a chief ornament, and gives the most general delight; whereas in the nobler Greek and Latin, far from adding any beauty to them, it becomes ridiculous, and occasions disgust †. So that any nation, which is proud of it's poetry on that score, only boasts of it's barbarity, and is so far on a

\* This will be at once perceived by looking over the poems in Leonine verse, which in the times of monkish learning were so much in vogue.



footing with those savages who wear rings and other gewgaws in their noses, and bobbing at their lips, by way of ornament. And should any people be happily possessed of a language equally capable of all the charms and powers of numbers with those of the antients, yet give the preference to rhyme, wherein would they differ from the wild Indians, who barter their diamonds, and precious stones, for bits of glass and tinkling bawbles?

Rhime has not only been a false and unnecessary ornament to the English poetry, but it has likewise almost destroyed its true beauty, and in a great measure unharmonized our language. Like some kinds of red paint, which applied to the face, give it an artificial glow, but whose poisonous quality by constant use devours the natural bloom, shrivels up the skin, and impairs the constitution. So that a custom begun thro' accidental paleness from a weakly habit of body, or indulged thro' wantonness, may in time come to be not a matter of choice, but of necessity.

When

When our language was in it's first state of rudeness and imperfection, like most others derived from the same Gothick original, it abounded so in monosyllables, and words artlessly composed of the most dissonant and discordant letters, that all attempts in our poets towards introducing numbers and harmony into their measure, must have proved fruitless and vain. To supply their place they were therefore obliged to have recourse to rhyme. But when it was enriched and refined, by means of the cultivation of the learned languages, with vast stores of well-formed and well-sounding words, composed of different, and proper numbers of syllables, it would have been easy then to have established new and harmonious measures, suited to the genius of the newly improved tongue. But on the contrary, the only use made of these acquisitions, was, to increase the empire of rhyme. Foreign words were not admitted as denizens, but treated as prisoners; and without regard to their noble descent, were cloathed in slavish dresses, and chained to the oar. The merciless poets, with a cruelty

like that of Procrustes, dragged all such as were of tall and comely stature, to the bed of rhyme, and lopped them to that size. Nor did such of the natives as happened to resemble them in those respects, escape one bit better. Whatever disorders there might have been in our language before, this was the first blow which was given to it's constitution, and the first disease which seized upon the vitals. Most words of two syllables were reduced to one, of three to two, and so upwards. This too was done by a general law, with so little regard to sound, that the vowels were of course banished, and the harshest consonants often huddled together. Nor can there be any cause assigned for this, but that of increasing the poet's number of rhimes. For as the final syllables of our heroick lines in rhyme must be long, or accented, no word ending in a short or unaccented syllable, could possibly be made use of in that respect. Against this the poets found a sure remedy, by throwing out the vowels of every such short syllable, and crowding the consonants into the preceding one. This  
practice

practice is humorously described by Dr. Swift in one of the Tatlers : ‘ Thus we  
 ‘ cram one syllable, and cut off the rest ;  
 ‘ as the owl fattened her mice after she  
 ‘ had bit off their legs, to prevent them  
 ‘ from running away ; and if ours be the  
 ‘ same reason for maiming of words, it  
 ‘ will certainly answer the end, for I am  
 ‘ sure no other nation will desire to borrow them.’

An example or two will set this matter in a clear light, and at the same time shew the ill effects of such practice. The third person of the present tense of the English verb, to *move*, was formerly written *moveth*, of *prove*, *proveth* ; but as these could not be used as rhimes, they were reduced to one syllable, and the termination altered to *moves*, *proves* ; and this rule was made general in regard to all verbs. In the increase of the verbs, to *drudge*, to *grudge*, it was formerly wrote and pronounced *drudg-ed*, *grudg-ed*, as two syllables, but for the same reason they were reduced to one, *drudg'd*, *grudg'd*. In the last of these examples we may see that there are five consonants to one vowel.



And this custom, as Dr. Swift has very justly observed, of joining the most obdurate consonants, without one intervening vowel, has formed such harsh and jarring sounds as none but a northern ear could endure. In the former, by changing the old termination of *-eth*, as *proveth*, into *-s*, as *proves*, the use of that letter has been greatly multiplied. This is more immediately obvious in all such verbs as originally contain one or more *s*'s, as *designs* for *designeth*, *bisses* for *bisseth*, *dispossesses* for *disposseth*. By being made also the termination of most nouns substantive in the plural, instead of *en*, with which many of them formerly ended\*, and continuing to be the general sign of the genitive case, our language has been much hurt as to sound, by the perpetual repetition of a disagreeable letter, with which it before too much abounded, as the letter *c* before the vowels *e* and *i* had exactly the same power, and pronunciation†. And tho' custom have made all this so familiar to our ears, as

\* As *housen* for *houses*.

† e. g. *cease*, *civil*.

to let it pass unnoticed by us, yet it is immediately perceived by all foreigners, who have generally agreed in giving it the name of the hissing language.

Nor are these the only ill consequences of the use of rhyme; pronunciation has been also rendered more uncertain by it: for tho' at first view it might rather seem to be a guide to that, as it certainly would were it always used with scrupulous exactness, yet by the latitude which poets have allowed themselves, in order to render the task of rhyme more easy, it serves rather to perplex, than assist people, in their enquiries after true pronunciation. For these gentlemen have not been contented to admit into the number of good rhimes, all such words whose final syllables strike the ear with a similarity of sound, but all such as appear to the eye constructed in the same manner, tho' their sounds be very different when repeated. For instance; the words *loves*, *proves*, and *groves*, appear exactly similar to the eye; the vowels and two last consonants in all being the very same, they look as if their sounds too should be also exactly alike, and

would certainly be read so by one who was not acquainted with the idiom of our tongue. And yet these three words, which are allowed to be good rhimes, have very different sounds to the ear; tho' custom has rendered this familiar to us, yet the absurdity of the practice will be immediately visible by writing down the words as they are pronounced, *luvs*, *prooves*, and *groves*, by which we may perceive, that it is only in the last word the letter *o* has it's own sound, in the first it has the power of a *u*, and in the second of a double *o*, and consequently that these words can no more rhyme to each other than those that are composed of different vowels. Nor can there be conceived a more ridiculous rule than that which makes the eye an arbiter of sound. But the poets were in the right, in order to lessen their own labour, to obtain as great a latitude as possible for their favourite, rhyme; and as they were in undoubted possession of all words of similar sounds in speech, tho' spelt differently on paper, they thought they might with equal propriety lay claim to all words that were spelt on  
paper

paper as if they sounded alike, tho' they appeared very different when spoken. As this practice is universal even amongst our best rhimers, there is no occasion to say how much it may puzzle and mislead those, who would assist themselves in acquiring a knowledge of the pronunciation of our tongue by reading the poets: not to mention the many deviations from the right sound which may be pointed out in the best of them, on account of the temptation of an apt word. In which some have indulged themselves so loosely, as to give different pronunciations to the same word in different places, according as it best served the present turn. The same cause has also affected our language not a little in regard to the sense, and meaning of words. This will be obvious enough to any one who has studied our rhimers, and seen with how little ceremony they have made use of words which furnished them with a lucky rhyme, tho' at the expence of precision. And this may perhaps be one of the chief sources of the very vague significations of our words.

Thus



Thus has rhyme proved the greatest enemy to our language in all it's essential as well as ornamental qualities, and in proportion as the power and influence of that increased, those of sound, harmony, numbers, expression, energy, clearness, and precision, have been diminished. And tho' the general opinion be, that the refinement of our language may be dated from the time that the refinement commenced in rhyme, in the days of Dryden, &c. yet this may easily be shewn to be originally an error in judgement founded on false appearances, since strengthened by time, and custom; and that our language, instead of a progressive motion towards perfection, which it has been judged to have had by incautious spectators, has really been describing a circular one, and constantly, tho' imperceptibly, bending towards the point of it's original barbarity from which it set out.

That our language, in point of sound, has been continually relapsing into it's first state of barbarism, ever since the innovations made in it by means of the prevailing spirit of rhiming, may be seen by  
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comparing it's present with it's original condition in that respect. The great defects of our tongue, in it's rude primary state, were, that it was chiefly composed of monosyllables, and those made up of ill chosen consonants, linked together by as few vowels as possible. This fault it had in common with all other tongues, previous to their state of cultivation and refinement, but more particularly those spoken by the northern nations, the roughness of whose natures and manners seem to have communicated a harshness to their speech. When by conquest, commerce, the introduction of literature and of the arts and sciences, our language became first enriched with numbers of words borrowed from other tongues, or else new coined, it was only rendered more copious, and fit for use, but received little or no benefit in point of sound or harmony. For the new, and adopted words, were obliged to conform to the genius of the natives; and upon their admission, were stripped of their ornamental vowels, and many of their better sounding consonants were changed for those of a rougher kind, which  
were

were more in use, and familiar to the ear. They were all reduced to one, or to as few syllables as possible, by cutting off their initial vowels or their terminations. Thus out of *expendo*, was made *spend*, *extraneus* *strange*, *debitum* *debt*, *dubito* *doubt*, *clericus* *clerk*, and *spiritus* *spright*. In the plural of this last word, *sprights*, it is worth observing that there are seven consonants crammed into a syllable with only one vowel, and that from a word of three syllables with three vowels. Our first poets found it impossible to produce any thing harmonious out of such discordant materials, and were therefore obliged to content themselves with the single and poor ornament of rhyme. Those who succeeded them, endeavoured as much as lay in their power to remedy the defects in our language, and make it capable of numbers, by adding length to words, and increasing the number of vowels. This was begun by Sir John Gower, and afterwards carried to a great height by his disciple Chaucer. Tho' the language had not as yet arrived at sufficient perfection, to admit of discarding rhyme entirely, and relying wholly upon

upon numbers, yet by keeping rhyme in it's proper subordinate state, it was daily tending towards it. For in the days of Chaucer, rhyme was considered in it's true light, as the lowest part of poetry. Neither sound nor meaning were ever sacrificed to it; whenever their interests became incompatible, rhyme was always obliged to give way; it was thought a less evil to have an indifferent or bad rhyme, than to maim or perplex the sense or pronunciation. No words were contracted, no vowels thrown out of syllables in order to make room for that; on the contrary, they fixed initial, and added final vowels as often as possible. The terminating *e* was always sounded. The verbs in general were lengthened, by the addition of *eth* and *ed* in their variations. But all these steps towards rendering our language completely fit for numbers and measure, were defeated by some who afterwards arose, and who have very improperly been called the refiners of our tongue, when in fact they have been the chief corrupters of it. A few who were  
pos-



possessed of a happy facility in rhiming, by that pleasing knack, so levelled to the capacities of all people, debauched the taste of the nation, and of course gave rhyme the first place in poetry. This usurper, like all others, exercised it's power in a tyrannical manner, and the whole language was made subservient to it's will. Then it was that our vowels were again discarded according to the old barbarous rule, and the consonants huddled together. Then it was that the initial and terminating syllables were lopped, and monosyllables once again multiplied. The final *e* became mute, *eth* was changed into the hissing *s*, and *ed* was *stripp'd* of it's vowel; with numberless other corruptions, which it would be needless to repeat. And all this with no other view, but to increase the number of rhimes. Had they made use of this as a poetical licence only in the act of rhiming, the constitution of our language could not have been impaired by it. But the poets knew too well, that if words were written or pronounced differently at the  
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the end of lines from what they were in other places, rhyme would have but a precarious tenure, and would soon be dislodged. They therefore abbreviated their words in the same manner in all parts of the verse; and not contented with this, they introduced the same customs into prose too. Thus the evil has irretrievably been spread thro' the whole substance as well as form of our language. Whoever will take the trouble only to cast his eye over a few pages of Chaucer, and compare them with those of any modern poet, will soon discover, by the number of apostrophes in the latter, that the proportion of vowels to consonants was infinitely greater in his days than at present, and that consequently the words of our language were better constituted at that time to give pleasure to the ear in point of sound.

All these corruptions of our language will, upon the least reflection, evidently appear to have been owing to the neglect of the study of oratory. For had the art of speaking been made a necessary branch of education, (which it certainly should have been for many important reasons at

the time of the reformation) our language would very soon, like the Roman, have been fixed upon stated invariable rules. The care of it in regard to sound and pronunciation would then have belonged to their natural guardians, the publick speakers, who were more interested in the proper support of those, as they addressed their words only to the ear; nor would they have suffered this province to have been usurped by the poets, whose works are chiefly submitted to the eye. The poets must in that case have taken their standard of sound and pronunciation from the orators, who certainly had the best right to fix it; whereas, by means of this neglect, our speakers have been obliged to follow the poets in all their capricious changes of pronunciation, and in the Gothic sounds again restored by them, thro' the vile amputation of syllables, and banishment of vowels, in order to bring down our words to their base standard. Had the art of reading and speaking well been studied by all who applied themselves to literature, people in general would have had some rational principles, and stated rules

rules to guide them in those points; and would therefore never have suffered such absurd and pernicious innovations to have taken place. But as they had neither precept, nor example, they were of course without either judgement, or taste; and consequently were admirably fitted to follow with a blind zeal such writers as were most pleasing to them, or most fashionable. This prevailing ignorance, and want of taste, obliged the poets also to adapt their measure to the capacities of their readers. For there can be no doubt, had knowledge and a good taste been more general, but that all who were possessed of real genius, would have applied themselves to the cultivation of numbers and measure only, and left rhyme to the pretenders, and those of low capacities. But to what purpose was it to be at great pains and cost to collect pearls in order to throw them before swine? Numbers, cadence, and harmony in measure, can no more be perceived by persons who can not read with propriety and grace, than the charms of a musical composition can be known from a view of the notes, by one



who is not acquainted with their powers. There are few ears indeed so dull that can not perceive rhyme ; and this it was which made it of such general use amongst all who wished to have many readers, all who wrote either with a view to profit, or present reputation. Let me endeavour to set this whole matter in a clear light. Every one who is acquainted with Latin poetry must be convinced, that it is impossible to know any thing of the cadence of their verses, without a knowledge of prosody. For as their various sorts of metre were composed of different kinds of feet, formed out of different combinations of long and short syllables from which resulted the rhythmus, or cadence, it was impossible to perceive the one, without knowing the other. But the quantity being once determined, and the particular movements or feet known whereof the verse was composed, whether heroick, saphick, alcaick, &c. the cadence became immediately perceptible even to the dullest ear, on account of the simplicity of their measures, which hardly ever admitted more than two movements, or  
feet,

feet, in any particular kind. For instance, their heroick measure admitted only of the dactyl and spondee. Thus, as the abbè Du Bos has justly remarked, ‘ The observing of the rules of Latin poetry is a necessary cause of numbers in verses composed according to the rules of this poetry. The succession of short and long syllables variously mixed pursuant to the proportion prescribed by art, produces always in Latin such a cadence as the kind of verse requires \*.’ Now if we compare our heroick measure with theirs in this respect, it will evidently appear that it is much more difficult to perceive the cadence, or rhythmus, of the English, than of the Latin verse. For if what I have before advanced be true, which can certainly be proved, that the English heroick measure will admit of eight movements, instead of their two; of all the various kinds of feet which were used in all their different sorts of measure; it will necessarily follow, that it will require rather a more accurate knowlege of prosody, and more application and prac-

\* Vol. i. ch. 35.

tice, to read or repeat English verses with propriety and grace, than the Latin. This will be sufficiently illustrated by considering how easy it is to beat time to any simple uniform movement that is generally known, such as that of a minuet, in comparison of the more complicated, and varied concertos. And, to carry on the allusion, it will require no great skill or pains to learn to play or sing tunes whose equal and similar parts form an easy modulation, but to play or sing at sight those whose harmony is the result of diversity and inequality in their members, will demand a complete knowledge of the art, as well as much practice. When therefore we reflect, that notwithstanding the great ease and certainty with which the art of reading and repeating their poems might be acquired, the Romans took uncommon pains to arrive at the utmost accuracy in that respect; that to the knowledge of the rules, constant practice was added; that they had persons regularly trained to be able to perform it with exactness and grace, as much as our fingers now are in musick; and that the

reciting fine passages out of Virgil, and their other excellent poets, was a chief part of their entertainment, in the same manner as the singing select airs of Handel, or playing favourite solos of Gemini-ani, are with us ; we need no longer wonder that skill and good taste in point of numbers so generally prevailed amongst them. And for reasons quite contrary, we can not be at a loss to know the cause of the total ignorance, and universal bad taste, in that respect, amongst us. We neither know any thing of prosody, nor have any rules as yet settled in regard to it. The quantity of our syllables is still vague, and undetermined. There are no persons trained to the art of reading well, nor have we ever an opportunity of hearing any of our poems skilfully and gracefully recited. All this will appear the more extraordinary, when it is considered how much more necessary such attention and pains are to us, than they were to them. For, as it has been before observed, a knowledge of quantity alone, which must have been habitually acquired in a country where the speech was so regulated, and



exactly spoken, (and indeed, as Cicero has informed us, was possessed by the meanest of the people) was sufficient to make them perceive the cadence of their several measures, and to repeat them with propriety, tho' not with grace. But there are more ingredients go to the composition of English numbers, which as often depend upon the sense and meaning of the words, as upon the sound and quantity of their syllables. Accent and emphasis are not here always confined to their distinct provinces, inasmuch as accent often determines the sense, and emphasis the sound of words. Quantity with us is not always ascertained by the mere value of syllables considered as simple sounds, since it is in the power of emphasis to alter their quality, and to change a syllable, short in it's own nature, into a long one. So that no one can pretend to read harmoniously, who can not also read sensibly. This was otherwise amongst the Romans; for the quantity of syllables being immutably fixed, a certain proportion of the long and short, ranged according to stated rules, were a necessary cause of numbers in their verses, whether they

they were read sensibly or not. It is true, that this has greatly increased the difficulty of reading our poetical compositions with harmony and propriety; nor can it indeed, on that account, be well done, without first studying them; yet the extraordinary labour would be well rewarded, by the additional expression, energy, and variety, which this very circumstance has given to our numbers.

When therefore it is considered, that in order to perceive the harmony, as well as force, of English numbers, a person must not only know how to give the proper accent to each word, and the exact degree of length and shortness to each syllable, but he must likewise be always able to lay the emphasis right, and in it's due proportion, as any variation in that will make a change also in the metre; it must be evident that this skill can be obtained only by a complete-knowledge of the art of reading, and speaking with propriety: and this art, which perhaps is more difficult than any other, can only be acquired as the rest are, by study, precept, and example. Since therefore the people  
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of this country have never applied themselves to the study of this art, nor have ever been furnished with precepts or examples, it must necessarily follow, that a general ignorance in that respect has always prevailed here. The consequence of which general ignorance was, that the poets were of course obliged to bring down their verses to the capacity of their readers, and to write only in such measures as might be most obvious, and in such numbers as might be most easily distinguished by an uncultivated ear. Hence it came to pass, that rhyme, which could be universally perceived by all readers, became universally used by the poets; and our heroick measure, which was capable of an almost endless variety, was in general reduced to one uniform Iambick movement, which of all others is the most easily perceived, as it requires only a rest of the voice on every second syllable. To shew this necessity brought upon our poets in it's true light, it will be proper to take notice that their works were never publicly recited, as those of the Romans were, amongst whom skilful readers train-

ed to the purpose, could set off the variety of their numbers, by suitably varied tones; but were only to be privately read by each individual, utterly unstudied, and unskilled in that art. It was impossible that such readers could perceive the harmony of numbers resulting from the various combinations of different feet, tho' they might easily enough become masters of a simple modulation made by a successive repetition of one regular movement. As the Iambick foot is by far the most pleasing of those whereof a verse can be formed without the admission of any other, and as it is the only one which in the English heroick could answer that end, it of course came to be most generally used. By this general use, the hearer became so habituated to the sound, that it was made the common standard of measurement, and the admission of any other feet into the verse, would sound like discord to ears formed to that particular cadence. Thus the ignorance of readers gave bounds to the skill of the poet, as the skill of the poet could not be perceived by, and consequently could have no influence over,  
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the ignorance of readers. All that was left to the writers in this case, was to take advantage of this general want of knowledge, and turn it to their own account, by making it the means of lessening their own labour, and of giving pleasure with as little expence of time and pains as possible. And these ends were effectually answered by conforming to the prevailing bad taste. For, as it was before observed, there can be no doubt but that it is infinitely less difficult to rhyme completely, than to compose numerous and harmonious verses. To which it may be added, that it will require much less labour to proceed in one regular uniform movement, which is rendered easy by a little practice, than to be perpetually employed in finding out and chusing such combinations of various feet as will produce the finest harmony, and give the greatest force of expression, to each particular thought.

Here it may be said, that the poets by conforming to these rules, must be defeated in their end of giving pleasure, as such a vicious uniformity of cadence, and such a perpetual jingle at the end of each distich,

tich, must in any long work occasion satiety and disgust to the ear. But against this the writers had a twofold barrier. For in the first place, their compositions being read only in the closet, are hardly ever pronounced aloud, and the eye can not be at all affected by looking over a perpetual succession of the same sort of movements, tho' the ear would be hurt by hearing them sounded. And one thing has contributed to occasion a general delusion in this respect, which is, that most readers select a few shining passages out of a favourite author, which they get by heart, and repeat aloud; and these being composed of feet which form a very agreeable cadence, as well as such a one as is pronounced with ease, will for so much give great delight and satisfaction. And the reader is apt to form a judgement of the whole poem by these specimens. Whereas were the whole to be recited, he would soon be convinced how much he had erred. He would then feel, that nothing can be so disagreeable to the ear as a constant uniformity of cadence, and the more smooth and flowing the numbers

bers are, the more likely are they to occasion disgust, by any long successive repetition. Sweetness of sound being in this respect to the ear, what that of taste is to the palate \*. If the admirers even of Pope want to be convinced of this truth by experience, far more prevailing than arguments, let them only allot two or three hours of a morning to the reading aloud such of his pieces as are in the highest reputation for numbers, and their taste must be much corrupted indeed, if they do not find great weariness and satiety, before half the time be passed. Thus the defects in their measure became secure of discovery, by being generally submitted to a sense which could not judge of it; and rhyme was established by the strong power of custom, which has made it be considered as an essential and shining ornament of our poetry. So that whilst there are more readers who can perceive the ca-

\* This point can not be more clearly proved than by considering, that even in musick, a continued and unvaried strain of modulation will occasion satiety, and grow irksome to the ear, and that it is only by a judicious mixture of discords with concords that an agreeable harmony can be formed.

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dence of a simple modulation, and the jingle of similar sounds, than can distinguish the harmony resulting from the varied combinations of different movements, such as have built their poems on the former rules, will never want a sufficient number of admirers.

But in order to make a more secure barrier to their ill-founded establishment, lest people should open their eyes, and see their error, the poets have contrived to mislead their judgement, by laying down a false rule, which must for ever keep them at a distance from all knowledge of numbers: that is, that an English heroick verse is composed of ten semipeds, or syllables. A rule so contrary to common sense, to experience, and which has been productive of such mischief to our language by multiplying unnecessary abbreviations, that it is wonderful how it ever obtained. To talk of measure made up of semipeds, is like talking of tunes composed out of half tones. If the rule be just that ten syllables will make a verse, ten short ones will answer the end as well as ten long. Now as a long syllable takes  
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double the time of pronouncing that a short one does, it will follow, that one line may be of double the length to the ear that another is; and what a strange inequality as well as irregularity, when we come to consider in what various proportions this may be used, must not this introduce into our measure? Indeed this rule is founded upon a principle, neither more nor less absurd, than making the eye sole arbiter of sound: that is, because syllables of written words may appear to the eye to be of equal length, the ear must receive the law from that, and be compelled to admit them to be so, contrary to it's immediate conviction, when they are sounded. But as the works of our poets were chiefly to be submitted to the eye, they were in the right to increase the authority and power of that organ as much as possible; and by this means they were able at least to establish a certain rule to all readers, however erroneous it might be; for the eye can not be mistaken in the number of syllables, tho' an ill-informed ear might be in their length or shortness. By establishing this judicial power in the eye,  
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they also gained a vast acquisition to the number of rhimes, since all compounded of similar letters passed muster before so incompetent a judge, which the skilful ear would have rejected on account of the dissimilitude of sound. Yet with whatever industry this rule was propagated amongst the readers, the writers were too wise to follow it in their compositions. They knew it was incapable of producing either harmony, cadence, or measure. The only use therefore of this false light was to guide people wrong, that they might not pry too curiously into their numbers, which would not bear a close inspection.

The abbè du Bos has treated of this matter with great accuracy, in a comparison which he has drawn between the French and Latin poetry. I shall select a few passages from him, which will serve to illustrate the subject, and at the same time by affording us a comparative view of the French measure with ours, will shew what a vast superiority we are capable of having over them in that respect. After having made it clear, that the obser-

vation of the rules of Latin poetry was a necessary cause of numbers and measure, he adds, ‘ Now it is saying a vast deal in  
‘ praise of the rules of Latin poetry, to  
‘ maintain that they execute one half and  
‘ more of the work ; and that the poet’s  
‘ ear is charged only with one point, that  
‘ is, with minding to render the verses  
‘ melodious, by a happy mixture of the  
‘ sound of the syllables whereof they are  
‘ composed. I shall endeavour now to  
‘ prove, that the observing of the rules of  
‘ French poetry, is productive of neither  
‘ of those effects ; that is, that French  
‘ verses exactly conformable to those rules,  
‘ may be destitute of numbers and harmo-  
‘ ny in the pronunciation.

‘ The rules of French poetry deter-  
‘ mine only the arithmetical number of  
‘ syllables, whereof the verses are to con-  
‘ sist. They decide nothing with regard  
‘ to the quantity that is in poetry, with  
‘ respect to the length and brevity of those  
‘ syllables. But as the syllables in French  
‘ words are sometimes long and sometimes  
‘ short in the pronunciation, there are se-  
‘ veral inconveniencies arising from the  
‘ silence

‘ silence of our rules with respect to their  
‘ combination. In the first place it hap-  
‘ pens, that several French verses, which  
‘ have nothing to be reproached with in  
‘ point of rules, contain nevertheless too  
‘ long a succession of shorter or longer syl-  
‘ lables. Now the too great length of  
‘ this succession obstructs the numbers in  
‘ the pronunciation of the verses.

‘ The rhythmus or cadence of a verse,  
‘ consists in the alternative of long and  
‘ short syllables varied according to a par-  
‘ ticular proportion. Too great a number  
‘ of long syllables ranged successively one  
‘ after another, retards the progression of  
‘ the verse in the pronunciation. Too  
‘ great a number of short syllables suc-  
‘ ceeding one another immediately, ren-  
‘ ders it disagreeably precipitant.

‘ Secondly, it falls out frequently, that  
‘ when we have a mind to examine two  
‘ Alexandrine French verses connected  
‘ together by the same rhyme, with re-  
‘ gard to the time in pronouncing each  
‘ verse, we find an enormous difference  
‘ between the length of these verses, tho’  
‘ they are both composed according to



the rules. Let ten syllables out of twelve, which compose a masculine verse, be long ; and let ten syllables of the following verse be short ; these verses, which will appear equal on paper, will be of a surprising inequality in the pronunciation. Wherefore these verses, notwithstanding their being allied to one another, and answering by one common rhyme, will lose nevertheless all the cadence which might arise from the equality of their measure. Now 'tis not the eye, but the ear, which judges of the cadence of verses.

This inconvenience does not, as I have already observed, attend such as write Latin verses, by reason that the rules prevent it. The arithmetical number of syllables which constitutes each kind of Latin verse, is determined with regard to the length or brevity of these syllables. These rules, which were made from observing the suitable proportion in each kind of verse between the arithmetical number, and the quantity of syllables, decide in the first place, that in the particular feet of a verse we ought

‘ to put syllables of a certain quantity.  
 ‘ Secondly, when these rules leave the  
 ‘ poet at liberty to employ long or short  
 ‘ syllables in a particular part of the verse,  
 ‘ they direct him, in case he chuses to  
 ‘ use long syllables, to employ then a  
 ‘ lesser number of syllables. If the poet  
 ‘ determines in favour of short syllables,  
 ‘ he is ordered by the rules to use a greater  
 ‘ number. Now as the pronouncing of a  
 ‘ long syllable continues double the space  
 ‘ of time that a short one does, all the La-  
 ‘ tin hexameters are consequently of the  
 ‘ same length in the pronounciation, tho’  
 ‘ some contain a greater number of syl-  
 ‘ lables than others. The quantity of  
 ‘ syllables is always compensated by their  
 ‘ arithmetical number.

‘ Hence the Latin hexameters are al-  
 ‘ ways equal in the pronounciation, not-  
 ‘ withstanding the variety of their pro-  
 ‘ gression; whereas our Alexandrine verses  
 ‘ are frequently unequal, tho’ they have  
 ‘ almost constantly an uniformity of pro-  
 ‘ gression. Hence some criticks have been  
 ‘ of opinion, that it was almost impossible  
 ‘ to write a French epick poem of ten

‘ thousand verses with any success. True  
‘ it is, that this uniformity of the rhy-  
‘ mus has not obstructed the success of  
‘ our dramattick poems in France and fo-  
‘ reign countries; but those poems which  
‘ do not exceed two thousand verses have  
‘ sufficient excellencies to sustain them,  
‘ notwithstanding the satiety of the like-  
‘ ness of their numbers. Besides, it is less  
‘ observed on the stage, where these sorts  
‘ of pieces appear with greatest lustre, by  
‘ reason that the actors, before they fetch  
‘ their breath, run one verse into another,  
‘ or else fetch it before they have finished  
‘ the verse, to prevent our being so sen-  
‘ sible of the vitious uniformity of it’s  
‘ cadence.

‘ What has been here said with respect  
‘ to hexameters, may be equally applied  
‘ to any other kind of verse. Those which  
‘ run precipitately by reason of their be-  
‘ ing composed of short syllables, last  
‘ therefore as long as such as go a very slow  
‘ pace, because of their being composed  
‘ of long syllables. For example, Virgil  
‘ uses short syllables as much as the rules  
‘ of metre permitted him in that verse, in  
‘ which

• which he draws so complete a picture  
 • of a courser in full gallop, that the very  
 • sound of the verse makes us imagine we  
 • hear the noise of his motion.

• *Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*

• This verse contains seventeen syllables,  
 • but it does not continue longer in the  
 • pronunciation than the following verse  
 • of thirteen, in which Virgil describes the  
 • Cyclops at work, and lifting up their  
 • arms to strike the hammers on the anvil,  
 • an effect which is well represented  
 • in the cadence of the verse.

• *Olli inter sese multa vi brachia tollunt.*

• Thus the cadence of verse is not at  
 • all interrupted by using a greater number  
 • of short or long syllables, in order  
 • to give a better description of the object.

From what is here said it is evident, that the rules of French poetry neither produced equality of measure, nor variety of numbers, which are the only sources of harmony in verse. The writers therefore endeavoured to conceal the want of equality in measure, by an uniformity of cadence, and to compensate for the want



of variety of numbers, by rhyme. How poor a succedaneum these were, must be known to every reader of taste. The ingenuous criticks of France, far from boasting of their poetry, have acknowledged it's defects, and lamented the poverty of their language, which would admit of no other ornaments than what were prejudicial to it in it's most essential points. This is strongly set forth by Du Bos, where he considers the difficulties brought upon a French poet by being under the double restraint, of following the natural order of words, and of rhiming. As to the first, he observes, ' That a Latin writer may  
' easily avoid any disagreeable collision of  
' sounds by the help of transposition;  
' whereas it is very rare that one can get  
' rid of this difficulty in French by means  
' of such an expedient. There is very  
' seldom any other resource left but that  
' of altering the word which interrupts  
' the harmony of the phrase, or else to  
' make the latter fall a victim to the former. Nothing is more difficult than to  
' preserve the respective rights of sense  
' and harmony, when we write in French;  
' so

‘ so great is the clashing of their several  
‘ interests.’

In another place where he considers the effect of this restraint, added to that of rhyme, he says, ‘ That rhyme alone becomes, thro’ the subjection of the French phrase to the natural order of words, as checking a restraint for an ingenious poet, as all the rules of Latin poetry. In effect, we seldom observe, even in the most indifferent Latin poets, those idle epithets that are employed as mere expletives to fill up the verse ; but what numbers of them do not we meet with, even in our best poems, introduced by the sole necessity of rhiming ? Without enlarging any farther on this article of the difficulty of rhiming, the reader will give me leave to refer him to Boileau’s epistle to Lewis the fourteenth on the passage of the Rhine ; as also to the epistle written by the same poet to Moliere. There he will see better than I can tell him, that if rhyme be a slave whose duty it is to obey, yet it costs a great deal to reduce this slave to a proper state of subjection ?’

Rol-

Rollin has treated of this matter only superficially, and has not, like Du Bos, dived to the bottom. Nor has he considered it with the same candour, and impartiality, but has shewn evident marks of prepossession in favour of the French tongue. He says, † ‘ The different tastes  
‘ of different nations in point of versification, has something in it very surprising.  
‘ What in one language is extremely  
‘ agreeable, in another is insipid, and the  
‘ mark of a bad taste ; rhimes for instance,  
‘ which have so good an effect in modern  
‘ poetry, and strike so agreeably upon the  
‘ ear in French, Italian, Spanish, and  
‘ High-Dutch, are shocking in Greek and  
‘ Latin ; and in like manner the measure  
‘ of the Greek and Latin verses, which depend upon the quantity of syllables,  
‘ would have no grace in our modern  
‘ poetry.

‘ There is one thing in this diversity of  
‘ taste, which very much puzzles me,  
‘ and that is, why rhimes, which please  
‘ so much in one language, should be so  
‘ shocking in another. Can this difference

† Belles Let. vol. i. b. ii. ch. 2.

‘ arise from habit and custom, or is it derived from the nature of languages ?

‘ The French poetry (and the same may be said of all the modern languages) absolutely wants the delicate and harmonious variety of feet, which gives numbers, smoothness, and grace, to the Greek and Latin versification, and is forced to be content with the uniform joining together of a certain number of syllables of equal measure in the composition of it’s verses. To arrive therefore at it’s proper end, which is pleasing the ear, it is under a necessity of seeking out for other graces and charms, and supplying what is wanting, by the exactness, cadence, and plenty of rhimes, which make up the principal beauty of the French versification.’

Yet tho’ he has allowed so much in this place, in another, where he has more particularly enumerated the great advantages which the Greek and Roman languages have over the French in other respects, he concludes with this extraordinary question, ‘ And yet notwithstanding all these seeming impediments, can it be perceived



‘ceived from the writings of good authors,  
‘that our language is in any wise defective,  
‘either as to copiousness, variety,  
‘harmony, or any other grace?’ A question which carries with it such an apparent stamp of prejudice, that it is astonishing how it could have dropped from the pen of a writer, in general remarkable for accuracy and penetration. The absurdity of such a method of settling the point cannot be shewn in a clearer light, than by supposing the same question put to a Dutchman, Swede, Norwegian, Russian, or the native of any country where the language is in the most uncultivated state; and it will undoubtedly be decided by each of them in favour of their own, from a natural affection to their mother tongue. Nor is this prejudice peculiar to barbarians only, or the offspring of ignorance, for we find even amongst the polished Greeks, that tho’ the Attick idiom was allowed to be the purest of all others, yet the other states of Greece tenaciously adhered to their respective dialects, from the insuperable force of early impressions and habit.

But

But whatever necessity the French and other modern tongues may be under to make use of rhyme, and the imperfect rule of measure which they have employed, the English alone, from the very genius and constitution of the language, need not submit to those restraints. On the contrary, from whatever lucky concurrence of circumstances it hath happened, it may be proved to be superior in it's qualities not only to all the modern, but upon the whole to the admired languages of antiquity. Whether it be, that as in the well-known story of the painter's sponge, the accidental blending of the different colours produced a more natural foam on the horse, than the utmost skill of the pencil could have drawn, so the variety of tongues out of which ours has been composed, has casually formed one more perfect in it's nature than the utmost labour or art of men could have contrived; or from whatever other cause it may proceed, the fact is certainly so, that we are possessed of one more capable of answering all the purposes of speech, whether of use or ornament, than any  
that

that has hitherto existed upon earth. The very reasons assigned by the French writers why their language was incapable of measure or numbers, shew that ours is capable of both. The chief of which are given by Rollin, when in speaking of the Romans, he says, ‘ They had a thousand  
‘ delicacies in their delivery, which we  
‘ are strangers to. They distinguished the  
‘ accent from quantity, and knew very  
‘ well how to raise a syllable, without  
‘ making it long, which we are not accus-  
‘ tomed to observe. They had even se-  
‘ veral sorts of long and short vowels, and  
‘ expressed the difference.’ Whoever can read English with propriety will see, that this is the very case of our language, tho’ these beauties are lost to a vitiated ear. This distinction between accent and quantity, which Capella calls the very soul of sounds, and the foundation of harmony, *animam vocum & musices seminarium*, may be constantly perceived in a just and correct pronunciation. We too can raise a syllable without adding to it’s length. And as to the long and short vowels, we have as copious a use of them as ever the  
Ro-

Romans had, and much more so, as well as more easily to be distinguished now, as Latin is pronounced. Every vowel with us is sometimes long, and sometimes short, and their different quantities are marked by different pronunciations, which is not the case of the Latin at present, as we can not know the different sounds given to them by the antients, according to their quantity, in their speech. We have the use of the *cesura* too in as great a latitude as they, since it may be at the end of any syllable of an English verse, the last of course excepted. Whereas the *cesura* of the French is ever in the middle of the verse, which causes a perpetual sameness of cadence. So that we are not only possessed of all the same sources of harmony with the antients, but we have one super-added, which is the cause of a greater variety, and more forcible expression in numbers than all the rest ; that is, the unlimited power given to the emphasis over quantity, and cadence, by means whereof a necessary union between sound and sense, numbers and meaning in versification, unknown to the antients, has been brought about.



about. From all these, together with the very structure of our language, a particular sort of measure has resulted, capable of such a variety of movements, that it can alone supply the place of most of the different sorts used by the antients in their different styles of poetry. The English blank verse is equally well suited to the heroick, tragick, comick, pastoral, elegiack, and didactick styles of poetry. Nor is this assertion founded on theory only and speculation, but warranted by practice, and confirmed by proofs. The *Paradise Lost* sufficiently shews it's fitness for heroick poetry. In the works of Shakespear we may easily discover, that it is the most proper metre for tragedy ever yet made use of: if the rule be well founded (as it undoubtedly is) that the best measure for tragick compositions is that wherein least art appears, and which approaches nearest to discourse. The same also may be seen in some of his comedies, of the more grave and † elevated kind, as the *Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, &c. In some of our English pas-

† *Interdum tamen & tollit comœdia vocem.* Hor.

torals,

torals, notwithstanding it is robbed of it's simplicity by rhyme, we may see how admirably well it would suit the nature of that sort of poetry, were it in the hands of a real genius, who was above wearing so improper an ornament. Milton's *Lycidas* affords an example of it's elegiack powers; and the *Cyder* of Philips, of it's didactic. It may be said, that the heroick measure of the antients was also used in their pastoral and didactic poetry, as in the eclogues and georgicks of Virgil. But in regard to the former, every reader of taste must see how ill suited it was to the subject, and how little the majesty of the lines agreed with the meanness of the characters. The numbers seem rather to be the composition of some poet in an Arcadian court, than the natural and uncultivated strains of simple rusticks. And in regard to the latter, whoever will compare the didactic part of the georgicks only, omitting the captivating episodes, with the poem on cyder by Philips, will soon be convinced of the advantage which the English poet had over the Roman in point of the aptitude of his measure, to his mat-

ter. Horace has used it too in his satyrs and epistles; but in order to make his verses, as he himself expresses it, *sermoni propiora*, he in fact only used the feet of heroick measure, but had little regard to the numbers or cadence, on which account they often offend the ear. Whereas nothing is less difficult than to preserve a proper degree of ease and familiarity in writings of that sort, by means of English blank verse, without ever offending against the rules of harmony. Add to all these it's use in a new vein of poetry, and perhaps not one of the most unpleasant kind, whereof no traces remain in the writings of antiquity, the grave burlesque, as in the Splendid shilling of Philips. This great variety of poetick styles which it is capable of supplying, is a sufficient confirmation of what I have advanced before in regard to our blank verse, that it may be composed of almost all the various feet used in all the various kinds of Latin poetry, since nothing else could make it equally adapted to so many different species of it, in which the Romans were obliged to make use of different measures, or to  
use

use the heroick very improperly in some of them. If therefore the proportion of movements, or feet, which our heroick measure admits, be to theirs as eight to two, it necessarily follows that we have an infinite advantage over them in point of variety and expression; and consequently, that ours in all works of length must be much more pleasing. It is therefore better adapted to the two noblest of all human compositions, the epick poem, and tragedy.

If it be said, that supposing we have this advantage over them in point of variety of numbers, yet their language must ever have a superiority over ours with regard to sound, from the happy construction of their words: that this must evidently appear by comparing both with the infallible rule laid down by Quintilian, *Ut syllabæ e litteris melius sonantibus clari-ores sunt, ita verba e syllabis magis vocalia; & quo plus quæque spiritus habet, eo auditu pulchrior* \*: and that therefore in all lesser compositions, such as odes, and lyrick poetry, they have a peculiar grace and

\* Lib. viii. c. 5.



sweetness which we can never arrive at, nor even attempt any thing in that way without the aid of rhyme : my answer is, that if their language be compared in this respect with ours as it now stands, we must undoubtedly yield the preference to them. But this defect in ours does not arise from the genius and constitution of our language, but from the abuses and corruptions crept into it thro' the want of care and cultivation. Nor was the perfection of the Roman in this respect owing to chance, or the original formation of their words, but to the great pains taken to polish and adorn it. We have it from undoubted authority, that previous to the study of eloquence, their language was in a very bad state as to sound, and their words ill suited to poetical compositions. Were the fifth part of the labour bestowed upon ours which was upon theirs, we might perhaps rival them even in this respect. Nay, had our language not been industriously spoiled and mangled, had not such numbers of our vowels been swallowed up by the monster rhyme, it might without much application or pains  
not

not have been inferior to the Latin in that point. For tho' we might be still obliged to confess that their words are composed of syllables more vocal, yet ours would have more spirit; theirs might have more of sweetness; but ours of energy; theirs might be better constituted to form melodious, but ours to produce harmonious combinations. Were the pleasing flow of the syllables to the ear alone sufficient to the perfection of sound in a language, the Greek and Roman both must yield to the modern Italian. But too great attention to sweetness will rob poetick numbers of their greatest beauties, which are, variety, and expression. Were our language to be studied and improved to the pitch of perfection whereof it is capable, it would perhaps appear, that the qualities of sound to fit it to all sorts of poetical compositions, are blended in more lucky proportions than in any other; and that we have on that account as great an advantage over the antients in point of numbers; as the invention and improvement of our musical instruments have given us with respect to harmony. But in both

cases we have failed of the end, by an abuse or neglect of the means which alone could give us a superiority. The † author of a late ingenious treatise on musical expression, has laid open the sources of the bad taste which at present prevails with respect to that art. As the fate of it's sister poetry seems to be exactly similar, and from similar causes, I shall make use of what he has said with regard to the one, to elucidate what I have advanced with relation to the other. He observes, ' That  
' properly speaking, there are but three  
' circumstances on which the worth of  
' any musical composition can depend.  
' These are, melody, harmony, and expression. When these three are united in  
' their full excellence, the composition is  
' then perfect : if any of these are wanting or imperfect, the composition is proportionably defective. The chief endeavour therefore of the skilful composer  
' must be, to unite all these various sources  
' of beauty in every piece ; and never so far regard or idolize any one of them, as  
' to despise and omit the other two.'

† Avifon's essay, &c.

Every

Every reader of discernment will see at once that this is exactly analogous to the numbers of poetry. He proceeds to shew the present errors and defects in these respects.

‘ The first error we shall note is, where  
‘ the harmony, and consequently the ex-  
‘ pression, is neglected for the sake of air,  
‘ or rather an extravagant modulation.  
‘ The present fashionable extreme of run-  
‘ ning all our musick into one single part,  
‘ to the utter neglect of all true harmony,  
‘ is a defect much more essential than the  
‘ neglect of modulation only, inasmuch as  
‘ harmony is the very basis of all musical  
‘ composition.

Is not this exactly similar to the practice of our poets in making rhyme the chief object of their attention, and using as much as possible one uniform movement in their verses, to the great prejudice of harmony and expression? In accounting for the spreading of this false taste, he assigns the following as the chief cause.

‘ It may perhaps be affirmed with truth,  
‘ that the false taste, or rather the total



‘ want of taste in those who *bear*, and who  
 ‘ always assume to themselves the privi-  
 ‘ lege of *judging*, hath often produced this  
 ‘ low species of musick. For it must be  
 ‘ owned that this kind of composition is  
 ‘ apt, above all others, at first hearing to  
 ‘ strike an unskilful ear; and hence the  
 ‘ masters have often sacrificed their art to  
 ‘ the gross judgment of an indelicate au-  
 ‘ dience.’

Is not this directly parallel to what has  
 been before said of poets and their read-  
 ers? †

He has assigned a quite contrary cause  
 for a corruption of a different kind, when  
 comparing the state of modern with an-  
 tient musick, he says, ‘ From the struc-  
 ‘ ture of their instruments, we can not  
 ‘ form any vast idea of their powers:  
 ‘ they seem to have been inferior to those  
 ‘ in use at present: but which, indeed, be-

† And if a false taste could be so generally propagated  
 from this cause, in a science founded upon certain prin-  
 ciples and established rules, which are open to the know-  
 ledge of all enquirers, how much more likely is it to be  
 the case in an art, where the studious can find no prin-  
 ciples to found their judgments upon, nor no rules to be  
 their guides, except a few that are false, which will cer-  
 tainly mislead them?

‘ ing

' ing capable of as much execution as ex-  
 ' pression, are only rendered more liable  
 ' to be abused. Thus the too great com-  
 ' pass of our modern instruments, tempt-  
 ' ing as well the composer as performer,  
 ' to exceed the natural bounds of har-  
 ' mony, may be one reason, why some  
 ' authors have so warmly espoused the  
 ' cause of the antient musick, and run  
 ' down that of the modern.'

Here indeed the comparison does not  
 hold. Our poets, far from running riot on  
 account of their abundance, have starved  
 themselves in the midst of plenty. And  
 thro' their want of skill in the manage-  
 ment of their instrument, instead of pro-  
 ducing the great variety of tones whereof  
 it is capable, they have confined them-  
 selves to a few simple modulations, which  
 make it appear to have a less compass than  
 those of the antients. And this was a  
 natural consequence of not studying our  
 language ; without which it was impos-  
 sible we could know it's peculiar graces  
 or force, or perceive what sort of num-  
 bers were best suited to it's genius. No-  
 thing was left us in this case, but imita-  
 tion ;

tion ; and as it was soon found that the Roman measures could not be adopted into our tongue, we followed the track of our neighbours, and built our poetry upon their rules. Thus did we submit, thro' choice, to all the imperfections under which theirs laboured from necessity. We blindly considered our language as formed upon the same Gothick model as the other European tongues ; and thro' want of enquiry, did not know that ours alone had luckily retained all the qualities which gave such charms to antient poetry ; besides some peculiar to ourselves, which, properly used, give us a superiority over them. We did not know that amidst all their variety of measures, in their different species of poetry, there is not one to which we either have not, or may not have, something analogous in ours, and for the most part more perfect in it's kind. Our blindness in this respect is at this day the more extraordinary, because it is no longer a thing in embryo, to be seen only thro' microscopes, but we have proofs of it glaring as day-light, and the full-grown perfect productions stare us in the face. But

*we*

*we have eyes and see not, ears have we and we hear not.* How few are there capable of knowing, that Milton does not exceed Homer and Virgil in any thing so much as in his numbers? And if it can be proved that we excel them in that respect in the more sublime compositions of epick and tragick poetry, no one can pretend to say that we might not vie with them even in the lyrick, were our language cultivated and restored to it's purity. We have at least one instance to ground this opinion upon, which is, that the English can boast of the most perfect ode that ever was produced in any language, in point of variety, harmony, and expression in it's numbers; and were it not disgraced by rhyme, it must, in the opinion of the most delicate, and unprejudiced judges, bear away the palm from all antiquity. I mean the ode on St. Cecilia's day, by Mr. Dryden. If our language in it's corrupt state were capable of so much, what might we not hope for from it were it polished and refined? Should we recover a true taste, and by discarding rhyme make room for our banished



nished vowels, who knows, when the sound of our words should be rendered more melodious, what pleasing measures a true genius might yet discover; and what bold Pindarick flights he might take when his wings were full grown, and his fetters taken off? Lest we should too hastily determine with respect to the number and kinds of measure which the genius of our language will admit, by what has been already done, be it remembered that Horace, the *numerosus Horatius*, was the first who discovered to the Romans, in his odes, the variety of numbers of which their language was capable, notwithstanding it had been for some time in it's utmost state of perfection before he began to write.

Of all the poets who have written in our language, there seem to be but two, who have dived into the principles of versification, and traced English numbers to their source. These were Dryden, and Milton. What I have said upon this subject will be sufficiently exemplified by the different conduct of these two contemporary writers, and the different reception which

which their works met with from the publick. Dryden knew perhaps the theory of numbers as well as Milton, but was far from making the same use of his knowlege, which he turned wholly to serve his own purpose. He wrote for bread, which depended upon present fame ; and present fame was to arise from pleasing the present taste. That once obtained, his bookseller, who never considered the intrinsick value, paid him in proportion to the bulk of his work, or the number of lines which it contained. As he was always a needy, he was of course a hasty writer. Possessed as he was of such a happy knack of rhiming, he could have produced a hundred lines that would give delight on account of that ornament, in the same space of time that he could have written ten, whose beauty depended upon the propriety and harmony of numbers, and whose charms, after all his pains, could not be perceived by the multitude of unskilful readers. Many hasty thoughts would even appear beautiful on account of the richness of a rhyme, which in blank verse would pass for puerile. Add to all this, that indulgence to  
all

all faults and errors in this kind of writing is much more easily granted, than in any other, from a supposed restraint which the poet lies under ; when in fact, to one possessed of a natural faculty in that respect, improved by habit, there is no style whatever so easy. When all this is considered, it can not be a matter of wonder, that Dryden should do every thing in his power to keep up a taste which was so perfectly adapted to his purposes, and to make it as extensive as possible. With this view, he gave a remarkable instance of what has been before observed, ‘ how much it is  
‘ in the power of one single person of re-  
‘ putation, to introduce or confirm a bad  
‘ taste in a whole people,’ by writing even tragedies in rhyme, which were not only heard without disgust, but, as we are informed, gave great delight to the vitiated ear of those times. Nor is it long since we have recovered taste enough to banish those monstrous performances from the stage. Upon the whole, Dryden was the reigning poet of his time, and his works were universally read and admired. Nor would the number of his votaries have  
6 been

been lessened at this day, had not a successor of more application, and greater leisure, outdone him in his own arts.

But Milton acted upon principles directly opposite. Like the great poets of antiquity, he painted for eternity; only his conduct in this respect was infinitely more disinterested, as he gave up all chance of present fame. *His light shone forth in vain, for the darkness comprehended it not.* His almost divine poem of Paradise Lost was sold for fifteen pounds, which was to have been received at three different payments, the last of which there is some reason to believe was never made: nor do we find that the bookseller was a great gainer by the purchase. Yet notwithstanding the unsuitable returns he met with, he still proceeded with a noble zeal for the honour of his country, and its language, to leave behind him the most perfect models, whose beauty, tho' lost upon the blindness of a present age, might be perceived by a more enlightened posterity. Nor could any mean or selfish motive induce him to swerve from that strict rule of right, by  
which



which he squared all his poetical writings. To make use of the words of one of the most ingenious as well as judicious of the moderns, \* ‘ The contempt, in which, ‘ perhaps, with justice, he held the age ‘ he lived in, prevented him from condescending either to amuse or to instruct it. ‘ He had, before, given to his unworthy ‘ countrymen the noblest poem, that genius, conducted by antient art, could ‘ produce; and he had seen them receive ‘ it with disregard, if not with dislike. ‘ Conscious therefore of his own dignity, ‘ and of their demerit, he looked to posterity only for reward, and to posterity only directed his future labours. ‘ Hence it was perhaps, that he formed ‘ his Sampson Agonistes on a model more ‘ simple and severe than Athens herself ‘ would have demanded; and took Æschylus for his master, rather than Sophocles, or Euripides: intending by this ‘ conduct to put as great a distance as possible between himself and his contemporary writers; and to make his work ‘ (as he himself said) much different

\* Mason’s second letter, pref. to *Elfrida*.

‘ from

‘ from what amongst them passed for the  
‘ best.

‘ The success of this poem was, ac-  
‘ cordingly, what one would have expect-  
‘ ed. The age, it appeared in, treated it  
‘ with total neglect; neither hath that  
‘ posterity, to which he appealed, and  
‘ which has done justice to most of his  
‘ other writings, as yet given to this ex-  
‘ cellent piece it’s full measure of popular  
‘ and universal fame.’

Here I must beg leave to dissent from the opinion of this very judicious remarker, where he seems to think that the posterity to which he appealed hath already done justice to most of Milton’s other writings, tho’ not to his Sampson. We have indeed done him all the justice in our power, and given him his due degree of praise for such part of his excellence as we were capable of perceiving; but I am far from thinking the present age so far enlightened as to be able to see, much less to admire, some of his greatest beauties. It is true, his *Paradise Lost* has long since obtained it’s full measure of popular and universal fame. But this perhaps may be attributed

to another cause than a general improvement of taste. It is more than probable that it was chiefly, if not wholly owing to the papers of criticism upon that poem, published by the most popular and universally admired of our \* writers in prose. As these are preserved in † books more generally read than perhaps any other in the English language, the fame of the poet goes hand in hand with that of the critick ; and the perfections of the poem pointed out by him, are as generally known, as the essays in which they are so displayed. One strong argument in support of this opinion, may be drawn from the vast number and variety of editions of that poem, which have made their appearance in the world since the publication of those papers, whereas before that time the work was little known or sought after. True criticism was then a new species of writing in English, nor has it been much improved since. It had not only the charms of novelty to recommend it, but likewise the highest abilities in the writer. All who admired the ana-

\* Mr. Addison.

† The Spectators.

lysis of the work, of course applied themselves to read the original; partly led by curiosity, and partly from an actuating principle of man, to judge for himself in all critical enquiries, and to examine whether the remarks were made with justice and propriety. This will sufficiently account for the universality of this poem as to it's being read, and also for the general applause which it has ever since met with. Readers of taste and knowledge extolled it from a perception of it's merit; and the ignorant, and tasteless, relied on the authority of the critick, and joined in the cry, lest they should discover their own want of judgement. This may also serve as a clue to guide us to the cause why the Agonistes obtained such a disproportionate share of fame, and was known only to a few; for had the same critick taken the same pains to point out the beauties of that poem which he did with regard to the other, it is more than probable that it would have been as universally known, and spoken of, as the other, tho' perhaps not so generally admired. To strengthen this argument it is well worth observation,



that no other work of his has made it's way to publick knowlege without the assistance of some helping hand. The Allegro and Penferoso were confined to the closets of the judicious, 'till the celebrated Handel by the charms of his musick forced them into fame. And his Comus lay buried in obscurity, 'till the lustre of musick shewed it to the publick eye : and how little that was capable of perceiving it's beauties, might be seen from the reception it met with. For whilst the musician's skill was applauded to the skies, the poem itself was either not attended to, or only occasioned weariness and satiety. It will be allowed by all, that had it not been for the ornament of the songs, the dramatick part could not have lived to a second night : and the whole piece, since the musick has lost great part of it's charms with it's novelty, is now scarcely able to hold up it's head. His Lycidas, and some other pieces, for want of some such assistance, are still in the shade.

A particular fatality seems to have attended Milton, different from the case of all other poets. Any one piece of allowed  
excel-

excellence, and general reputation, would be sufficient, in any other writer, to excite the highest curiosity to see whatever other compositions he might offer to the world, and to stamp a value upon them beyond their intrinsic merit. Whilst in his case, tho' there never was any thing more universally allowed, than that he was the author of the noblest poem that has appeared in the English language, yet this has not induced many people to look into some of his other works, tho' they are really in their several kinds of equal perfection with that. And this is an incontestible proof, that however general the praise has been, and however lavishly bestowed on the *Paradise Lost*, the greatest part of it arose from fashion and authority; and whatever quantity of admiration it hath excited, has been for the most part only pretended. For if people were really as much pleased with that work, as they say, and would make us believe, what could stop them from pursuing the delight which they must necessarily receive from the perusal of his other inimitable pieces?

The fact is, that tho' Milton has by the means abovementioned obtained universal fame, yet it is far from being founded upon a right and solid basis. Fashion, and the authority of a few allowed judges, may go a great way towards making a poem be talked of, and to obtain the incense of general praise; but this, as Macbeth says, is only

—— ‘ Mouth honour, breath,  
‘ Which the poor slave would fain deny,  
‘ and dare not.’

The poetical, like the regal crown, can have no great security but in the hearts of the people; and the hearts of the people can be engaged to the poet only by the pleasure and delight which his works afford them. Now tho' Milton has been put into possession of his lawful scepter, and all the due homage attendant on that has been paid to him; yet his throne seems only to be founded on his right, and hath not as yet obtained the security of the people's affections.

The reason of this will at once be seen, when we reflect, that however some other points in a poem may to the judicious appear

pear more essential, yet it is by the charms of versification alone that the multitude is caught. In poetry, as in painting, the unskilful majority are more captivated by the colouring than the drawing. If therefore the works of Milton appear defective in this respect; if his verses in general, far from giving pleasure and delight, should strike the uncultivated or vitiated ears of the age, as discordant, and unmusical, the whole difficulty will at once be solved. His other merits, and excellencies, displayed by judicious criticks, may procure him a few real, and shoals of pretended admirers; but can not gain him any lovers. Men may be reasoned into esteem, but not into affection. That arises from an involuntary delight, immediately perceived from a contemplation of the object which excites it. Mr. Addison has, with great accuracy and clearness, laid open the admirable art and profound judgement of Milton, in the choice and conduct of his fable, in the masterly drawing of his characters, with suitable manners, and in the sublimity and beauty of his sentiment and diction. These justly challenge our admiration, and de-



mand our praise. But the charms of his numbers are still covered as with a vail. The admirers of the antients, when they are compelled to allow him his due merits, yet add with a seeming concern, tho' with a secret satisfaction, that it is a pity so excellent a workman had such poor materials, and the compositions of so great a genius had not the advantage of such ornaments as the languages of Greece or Rome would have supplied: whilst those of modern taste, sincerely sigh for their dear rhyme, and lament the want of that uniformity of cadence to which their ears had been tuned. But there is not one reader perhaps in five thousand, who knows that the greatest beauty of Milton is his versification; and that he has excelled all the writers of all ages, and all countries, in the variety, expression, and harmony of his numbers.

Nor will this appear a very extraordinary assertion when it is considered, that this is impossible to be known without perfect skill in reading; that we are necessarily corrupted in our first principles of that art, by ignorant masters and false rules; and

and that there is not even an attempt made to amend this in the rest of our lives. Whilst therefore we remain in an ignorance of that art, we must as necessarily remain in a total ignorance of the true beauty and power of numbers, as we should do in regard to musical compositions, where the instruments are defective and out of tune, or the players unskilful. The poems of Milton must appear in the same light to us, as our pictures do to the Chinese, and seem to have too many black spots in them. 'Till that art is studied, we shall be so far from having it in our power to give that first of poets his due praise, that we shall be blind to some of his greatest perfections; beside the charms of versification, we shall lose some of the finest part of his imagery, and in many places not even be able to comprehend his full meaning.

Let us therefore apply ourselves seriously, and with diligence, to a study capable of affording us such delight. Let us no longer think, that to learn to read is sufficient, but to read well, and then,

‘Pleas’d

‘Pleas’d we shall hear, and learn the secret  
‘power

‘Of harmony, in tones, and numbers hit,  
‘By voice, or hand.’ \*

Or, as the same author says in his treatise  
on education, if we set about this work,  
‘We shall be conducted to a hill side, la-  
‘borious indeed at the first ascent, but  
‘else so smooth, so green, so full of good-  
‘ly prospect, and melodious sounds on  
‘every side, that the harp of Orpheus was  
‘not more charming.’

Let us examine our language with care,  
and search into it’s secret treasures. Let us  
no longer be contented with a poor mea-  
gre vein of ore which we find near the sur-  
face, and which, after the French fashion,  
serves us only to wiredraw, or gild over a  
baser metal; but let us dig deep into the  
mine, where we shall find a plenteous  
vein, equal in richness, and superior in  
magnitude, to that of the antients. Or if  
theirs should be allowed to be of a purer  
kind, yet ours will be found to contain no  
more alloy in it, than what will render it  
more fit for all sorts of workmanship.

\* Parad. reg.

Too long have the beauties of the British muse, like those of our ladies, been concealed, or spoiled, by foreign modes and false ornaments. The paint and patches of the French, the fantastical head-dress, the squeezing stays, and enormous hoop, only spoil the bloom of her complexion, the flowing ringlets of her hair, her easy shape, and graceful mien. Should a polished Athenian arise, and behold her thus decked out, he would be astonished to see, in a country enlightened by their rules and example, deformity made a science, and barbarism reduced to rule. Thus adorned like a harlot, she inflames the youth with wanton desires, and spreads infection thro' the land. What hopes can there be of a robust and healthy offspring from such impure embraces? Let us endeavour to recover her from the tyrannical sway of fashion and prejudice, and restore her to her native rights. Let us leave to the fallow French their rouge and ceruse, but let the British red and white appear in it's genuine lustre, as laid on by nature's own pencil. Let them torture the  
body



body into a fantastick shape, or conceal crookedness under an armour of steel ; let them cover puny limbs, and a mincing gait, under the wide circumference of a hoop ; but let the easy mien, the comely stature, the fine proportioned limbs decently revealed, and the unrestrained majesty of motion in the British muse, be displayed to sight in their native charms. Then shall she move forth confessed the genuine sister of the Grecian muse, and not the less beautiful for being the younger. Then shall her votaries burn with a pure and holy flame, and the poetical offspring, from a chaste marriage between sense and harmony, will be found lovely, vigorous, and long-lived ; instead of monstrous chimæras, shapes flitting as clouds, and mere airy echoes produced from the wanton amours of sound and fancy.

Upon the whole, were our language to be studied and cultivated, we should find, that in point of giving delight, it would not yield to those of antiquity ; and that it is much better fitted for universal use. Were it reduced to rules, it might be more easily learned, and with more accuracy,

racy, as it is a living language. The true pronunciation may be acquired with certainty, on that account, from the mouth of a proper master ; whereas we can at best only guess at that of the antients, and must therefore be strangers to many beauties in theirs as to sound. What in this case could hinder ours from being more universally propagated than any other, considering the great advantages we enjoy by means of general commerce, and a free press? And from the many excellent writings with which it is already enriched, together with those which may hereafter be added, probably even of a superior kind, should men of equal genius arise, with the advantage of having their labour lessened, and their way smoothed, why might there not be as fair a prospect of immortality to our authors, as to the Greek and Roman? Nothing but the most shameful neglect in the people can prevent the English from handing down to posterity a third classical language, of far more importance than the other two.

## CHAP. X.

*Of the means whereby our language may be refined and ascertained.*

THE only scheme hitherto proposed for correcting, improving, and ascertaining our language, has been the institution of a society for that purpose. But this is liable to innumerable objections; nor would it be a difficult point to prove, that such a method could never effectually answer the end. In the first place, it would be no easy matter to find a sufficient number of members properly qualified to compose such a society; as there are few or none trained in the study of those points, in regard to which they are to pass judgement: and perhaps there would not be one who should appear at such a board, without fixed and rooted errors from the prejudices of a wrong education. If they were not properly qualified, their rules and determinations would be proportionably false, and defective. In this case we should be in a worse

worse condition than without any rules at all. In the second place, supposing them to proceed ever so rightly in their system, tho' they might ascertain the meaning of words, it would be impossible by any works which they could publish to fix the sound and pronunciation, as a knowledge of those can be communicated only by speech. And unless some means can be found to ascertain those, the language must be in a perpetual state of fluctuation. But the chief reason which must ever render such a scheme abortive, arises from our constitution, and the genius of the people. The endeavours of such a society, in arbitrary governments, under the sanction and countenance of an absolute prince, may be crowned with success : but the English have no idea of submitting to any laws, to which they do not give their own consent. Tho' such a society were therefore to proceed upon the rightest principles, they would find it difficult to get their self-raised authority, had it even the sanction of the highest powers, acknowledged by a stubborn free people, ever jealous of their rights, and naturally inclined



clined to withstand all usurpations : and without a foundation on allowed authority, their whole edifice must of course fall to the ground. But why should we even think of following any methods pursued in the countries of slaves, and which at the best have fallen very short of perfection \*, when we have before our eyes the example of a free people like ourselves to guide us, and whose conduct in this point was followed by the most rapid and complete success ? The means which they employed are so exactly suited to our circumstances and situation, that we only want to make use of them, to attain our end, with equal ease, and certainty. It has been already shewn, that the study of eloquence was the necessary cause of the improvement, and establishment of the Roman language : and the same cause would infallibly produce the same effect with us. Were the study of oratory once made a necessary branch of education, all our

\* We find at this day that Monsieur Voltaire has set himself up against the determinations of the French academy, in many points, and that he has already multitudes of followers.

youth

youth of parts, and genius, would of course be employed in considering the value of words both as to sound and sense. The result of the researches of rational enquirers, must be rules founded upon rational principles; and a general agreement amongst the most judicious, must occasion those rules to be as generally known, and established, and give them the force of laws. Nor would these laws meet with opposition, or be obeyed with reluctance, inasmuch as they would not be established by the hand of power, but by common suffrage, in which every one has a right to give his vote: nor would they fail, in time, of obtaining general authority, and permanence, from the sanction of custom, founded on good sense.

It has been already sufficiently shewn, that we have all the same inducements to the study of eloquence, which the Romans had, together with some peculiar to ourselves, of a more powerful nature: nothing therefore could possibly hinder us from endeavouring to acquire skill in so useful an art, but the want of proper masters, who might be enabled to teach

it with ease, and certainty, by laying open it's principles, explaining them by examples, and affording in themselves models and patterns for imitation to learners. Could this once be done, there is no doubt but that the British youth would be inflamed with as great an ardour to arrive at excellence in that art, as those of Rome. For, to omit all the more powerful incitements of fame, and profit, the very pleasure resulting to themselves from the practice of it, would be of itself a sufficient motive to allure them to a close application, and to confirm them in an habitual exercise of it. Cicero, who enjoyed all the advantages resulting from a complete knowlege of this art, in the most eminent degree, does not scruple to say, in his Brutus, *Dicendi autem me non tam fructus, & gloria, quam studium ipsum, exercitatioque delectat.* Since therefore there are such strong motives of profit, honour, and delight, to induce individuals to the study of oratory; and since their labours and advancement in that art would in many points be attended with such excellent effects to the publick, but more especially in the  
arti-

article of refining and establishing our language, is it not a pity that no attempts are made towards the revival of it? Too long has the English tongue been neglected, too long have all sorts of corruptions and abuses been suffered to make their way into it. It is not yet too late to amend all, tho' the same inattention continued for a few years longer may possibly reduce it to an irremediable state. We have stronger reasons than ever at this very juncture to take care that our language be not wholly destroyed. One arises from a new-fangled custom introduced by some late authors, of spelling words differently from their wiser predecessors; and out of a poor ambition of shewing their learning, omitting and changing several letters under pretence of pointing out their derivation. But these gentlemen do not consider, that most of those letters which seem useless to them, upon paper, or improper, are of the utmost consequence to point out, and ascertain the pronounciation of words, which is already in too precarious a state. So that if this custom should continue to increase,



according to the caprice of every new writer, for two or three centuries more, the best authors we have will by that time appear as obsolete, and as difficult to be read, and understood, as Chaucer is at this day.

*Principiis obsta.* Innovations are ever to be withstood at first, since it has been often known that those which in their beginnings have appeared too slight to merit regard, have in time brought about the most total and surprising changes. There are also at present great endeavours used to introduce and establish another custom not less pernicious, and which may be attended with the most fatal consequences. There are many persons, and even large bodies of men, esteemed amongst the most learned, who being weary of the great uncertainty of pronunciation in our tongue, would reduce the whole to one invariable and general rule, that of throwing the accent as far back in our polysyllables as possible. It is inconceivable that such a thought should have entered into the heads of any but barbarians: much less that persons conversant in the Greek and Roman languages, should endeavour  
to

to establish a practice so opposite to that of those polished nations. They can not but know, that no word in theirs was ever accented beyond the antepenultima, or last syllable but two; and if they were able to read, they would know that this was founded upon the justest principles. Indeed nothing but a total ignorance of that art, could possibly make them think of introducing a rule, which if it obtained, would at once destroy all melody, harmony, and quantity, in our words, as well as derivative meaning.

We have at present also a much stronger inducement than ever, to the study of our language, as the way has been smoothed and made easy by the late publication of Mr. Johnson's dictionary. Without such a work, indeed, the task must have been extremely laborious, if not impracticable. Nor can the great merit and utility of that performance ever be perceived without such study. If that be brought about, the publick will no longer have reason to lament, that one of such uncommon genius, and abilities, should have passed so much of his life in a kind of work,

which has hitherto fallen to the lot of mean capacities. Nor will he himself have reason to regret the many irksome and disagreeable hours passed by him in a dry and laborious study, when he reflects on the proportion of fame which will attend it: since if our language should ever be fixed, he must be considered by all posterity as the founder, and his dictionary as the corner stone.

As the cultivation and establishment of that can be effected by no other means, but by the introduction of the study of eloquence, I shall close this head with a few passages from Quintilian, wherein the objections which may arise on account of the difficulty of arriving at excellence in that art are fully answered, and the motives to engage men in the pursuit are displayed in the brightest colours.

‘ With so many masters, and with  
‘ such a number of models, hath antiquity  
‘ furnished us, that no age could seem  
‘ luckier in the lot of it’s nativity than our  
‘ own ; for the instruction of which all  
‘ the preceding have laboured.

• Above

‘ Above all, we have a sufficient incen-  
‘ tive to persevere in our studies, when we  
‘ consider, that to say, because a thing has  
‘ not yet been effected, therefore it can  
‘ not be done, is a contradiction in nature;  
‘ since there was a certain period of time  
‘ when every thing that was great and ad-  
‘ mirable began to be produced. For just as  
‘ much as poetry was perfected by Homer  
‘ and Virgil, in the same high proportion  
‘ was eloquence improved by Demosthenes  
‘ and Cicero. In short, there was a time,  
‘ when whatever is excellent had no exis-  
‘ tence. But should a man even despair  
‘ of the highest attainments (and why he  
‘ should do so, who neither wants genius,  
‘ nor health, nor opportunity, nor a mas-  
‘ ter, no reason can be assigned) it is still,  
‘ as Cicero says, an honour to rank in  
‘ the second, and third degrees.

‘ Add to this, that even a moderate share  
‘ of eloquence produces great advantages;  
‘ and, if one measures these studies merely  
‘ by the profit, is almost on a par with the  
‘ perfection of oratory. Nor would it be  
‘ a difficult task to prove, either by an-  
‘ tient or modern examples, that there is



‘ no source from which men derive greater  
‘ honours, estates, connections, and pre-  
‘ sent as well as future fame ; if the dig-  
‘ nity of erudition would allow us to ex-  
‘ act this smaller recompence from a glo-  
‘ rious study, the mere exercise and enjoy-  
‘ ment of which most amply rewards our  
‘ application ; like those who make no  
‘ scruple of declaring, that not virtue, but  
‘ the pleasure which results from it, is  
‘ the object of their pursuit. Let it there-  
‘ fore be our whole ambition to arrive at  
‘ the true majesty of eloquence, than  
‘ which the immortal gods have bestowed  
‘ nothing better on men ; without which  
‘ all things become speechless, and are cut  
‘ off from the notice of the present age, as  
‘ well as the knowledge of posterity. In or-  
‘ der to compass this, let us always keep  
‘ the best models in our eye ; by doing  
‘ which, we shall either arrive at the sum-  
‘ mit, or at least see many below us.’

END of the SECOND BOOK

BR I-



B R I T I S H  
E D U C A T I O N , &c.

BOOK III. CHAP. I.

*Of the liberal arts, and their source.*

**T**HERE is no question which has in all ages puzzled the curious enquirers more, than when it has been asked, what the reason could be, that the liberal arts have in certain countries, at particular æras, made a rapid progress towards perfection, flourished together for a short space of time, (not so long as the life of a man) then either gradually fallen to decay, or perished suddenly, nor ever raised their heads again in those countries,  
in

in spite of the utmost endeavours used to revive them? I shall set down this question as stated at large by Velleius Paterculus. ' Who can sufficiently admire  
' that the most eminent wits of every  
' profession should have been crowded  
' into their proper class, and nearly  
' within the same limits of time? As  
' animals of a different kind, when shut  
' up in a pen, or any inclosed ground,  
' do nevertheless, quitting those of a distinct species, herd together each in a  
' particular body; just so men, whose genius qualified them for the noblest productions, have separated themselves from  
' the rest, in a manner which agrees both  
' as to the circumstances of times and improvements. Thus one æra, and that  
' too circumscribed within the space of not  
' many years, by means of those divine  
' writers, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, brought tragedy to perfection.  
' Thus under Cratinus, Aristophanes, and  
' Eupolis, did another æra finish the old  
' comedy: and thus, within the compass  
' of a very few years, did Menander and  
' his contemporaries, rather than equals,  
' Phi-

‘ Philemon and Diphilus, invent the  
‘ new ; leaving behind them perfor-  
‘ mances above all imitation. How short  
‘ a time did the philosophic wits, who  
‘ derived their original from Socrates,  
‘ continue to flourish after the death of  
‘ Plato and Aristotle ? Who before Iso-  
‘ crates, who after his hearers and their  
‘ scholars, distinguished himself as an ora-  
‘ tor ? So contracted was the æra, or space  
‘ of time, that no two deserve to be men-  
‘ tioned, who might not have seen one an-  
‘ other. Nor was this less the case among  
‘ the Romans than among the Greeks :  
‘ since, unless we go back to some rough  
‘ and rude performances, which have no-  
‘ thing but the honour of the invention to  
‘ plead ; in Accius and his contemporary  
‘ writers is the Roman tragedy to be found.  
‘ Much about the same time did the  
‘ charming elegancies of the Roman wit  
‘ receive their polish from Cæcilius, Te-  
‘ rentius, and Afranius. With regard to  
‘ our historians (even if we annex Livy to  
‘ the earlier class of them) an æra consist-  
‘ ing of less than eighty years produced  
‘ them all, except Cato, and some antient  
‘ and



• and obscure ones : neither did the rich  
• vein of our poets reach higher or lower.  
• But oratory, the power of pleading, and  
• the glorious perfection of prose elo-  
• quence, if we still except the same Cato,  
• (with the leave of Publius Crassus, of  
• Scipio, of Lælius, of the Gracchi, of  
• Fannius, and of Ser. Galba be it spoken)  
• did all so compleatly burst out in the  
• prince of his profession, Tully, that of  
• those who went before him, very few  
• can give you delight ; but you certainly  
• can admire none who was not either  
• seen by him or who saw him. Who-  
• ever diligently traces the characters of  
• time, will find that the same thing has  
• happened to grammarians, statuaries,  
• painters, and sculptors ; and that the  
• meridian of every art has been of an ex-  
• treme short duration.—Whilst therefore  
• I am continually searching after the  
• causes, why this, and the preceding  
• ages, have united men of the like ge-  
• nius in the same course of study and  
• improvement, I find none upon the  
• truth of which I can absolutely depend.

Thus,

Thus, after having established the fact, he acknowledges that he does not know how to account for it by any reasons which appear to him satisfactory. Nor indeed has this problem, notwithstanding the numberless attempts towards it, as yet met with a proper solution. Of all the writers upon this subject, the abbè Du Bos seems to have laboured the point the most, as he has employed the greatest part of the second volume of his *Critical Reflections* professedly upon that head. But whoever examines what he has said with attention, will find that he has shewn more fancy than judgement in his manner of discussing this point; and that his arguments are rather ingenious, than conclusive. He himself indeed has offered them with great modesty, and only as conjectures; for in the introduction he says,

‘ Whilst I have been meditating on this  
‘ subject, a great variety of ideas have  
‘ frequently presented themselves to my  
‘ mind, which I look upon rather as  
‘ simple glimmerings, than real lights.  
‘ . . . However, there is a sufficient air  
‘ of probability in these ideas, to think  
‘ them

‘ them worthy of entertaining my reader.’

Suppose therefore an explanation of this phænomenon should be attempted by a new hypothesis, not founded on speculation merely, but facts ; not supported by specious arguments, drawn from opinions and notions which are incapable of proof, but from the reason and nature of things. Suppose it be shewn that the liberal arts, whatever different courses they might afterwards take, all had their rise from one common fountain : it will no longer be a matter of wonder that their streams should be copious, and clear, in proportion to the exuberance, and purity, of their source ; nor that they should diminish or disappear as that was exhausted or dried up. In short, let us only suppose that oratory was the fountain from which alone the liberal arts flowed, and all the seeming difficulties and intricacies of this question, will be at once solved and explained. Let us see, in the first place, how far this hypothesis can be supported by facts ; in the next, by reason, and the nature of things. First, as to facts : the proof of the fol-

following propositions will be sufficient to establish it with respect to them.

‘ That the liberal arts never flourished,  
 ‘ or arrived at perfection in any country,  
 ‘ where the study and practice of oratory  
 ‘ was neglected.

‘ That in those countries, where the  
 ‘ liberal arts arrived at their highest pitch  
 ‘ of glory, there were no traces of them,  
 ‘ previous to the study of oratory.

‘ That the liberal arts always followed  
 ‘ oratory in their progress towards perfec-  
 ‘ tion; arrived at their summit soon after  
 ‘ that did; declined as that declined;  
 ‘ and, when that was banished, wholly  
 ‘ disappeared.’

## C H A P. II.

*That the liberal arts never flourished, or  
 arrived at perfection in any country,  
 however otherwise remarkable for know-  
 ledge, and ingenuity, where the study and  
 practice of oratory was neglected.*

**A**LL who are conversant in antient  
 history must know, that amidst the  
 various accounts transmitted of several  
 flou-



flourishing nations, remarkable for wisdom, knowlege, and learning; distinguished for the cultivation of all the useful sciences of life; there are no traces appear of their having brought the politer arts to any perfection: Such as the Assyrians, Persians, Chaldeans, Carthaginians, and many more. Nay even in Ægypt, and Phœnicia, from which countries the Greeks are allowed to have borrowed all their knowlege, and skill in other sciences, they are known to have been ever in a low and rude state. The few monuments that remained have incontestably proved this fact, as there were none, which shewed marks of any taste, but such as were known to be the works of Grecian artists. It is an undoubted truth, that both the Ægyptians, and Persians, when they set about any great work, were obliged to send to Greece for their painters and sculptors. We may find in many other countries a number of eminent names of great commanders, able lawgivers, wise philosophers, skilled in the deepest mysteries of science: but it is in the annals of Greece and Rome alone, that we must look for  
a list

a list of poets, historians, painters, sculptors, and musicians. Nor has all antiquity furnished us with a single instance of any excellent performance in any of those arts, which was not the production of some genius either born or bred in one of those two countries. And here let it be remembered, that it was in those two countries alone that oratory was ever studied and practised as an art.

## C H A P. III.

*That in those countries where the liberal arts arrived at their highest pitch of glory, there were no traces of them, previous to the study of oratory.*

**I**N Greece, where all these arts seem to have had their first birth, at least in any maturity, we can trace no memorials of them previous to the institution of oratory. The first works of any master which have been handed down to us, were those of Homer; and as Cicero has justly observed, it is apparent from those very works that eloquence had been

in high repute long before his time. So that tho' we can not fix the precise date of the first rise of oratory amongst them, yet we have a moral certainty that it preceded that of the other liberal arts. In Rome we can not be at a loss to fix the exact æra of both. We know that, previous to the introduction of the study of eloquence, which happened a little before the time of Scipio and Lælius, their taste for poetry, painting, musick, &c. was as rude and barbarous as in the most uncultivated nations; nor did there ever arise amongst them, before that period, one master of eminence in any of those arts, nor was there produced one composition in any kind worthy to be preserved and transmitted to posterity. Tho' it is well known, that in less than fourscore years after the institution of oratory amongst them, all those arts, together with eloquence, gradually arose to their highest summit; insomuch that Rome might almost vie even with Greece, in point of the number of excellent artists, as well as in the perfection of their several kinds of works.

## C H A P. IV.

*That the liberal arts always followed oratory in their progress towards perfection ; arrived at their summit soon after that did ; declined as that declined ; and, when that was banished, wholly disappeared.*

**I**T was in the age of Pericles and Demosthenes that oratory was brought to it's highest pitch in Greece ; and we find that all the great masters in the several arts, whose works have gained to them immortal fame, and have ever since been the admiration of the world, were their contemporaries. What an amazing number of poets and other writers started up and flourished together during that small space ? Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, in tragedy : Aristophanes, Eupolis, Cratinus, and Menander, in comedy : Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates, Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle, in prose : besides many others of great name, whose works have unfortunately perished. The same space of time produced Zeuxis, Apel-



les, Aglaophon, and many more, in the art of painting: Phidias, Praxiteles, Lysippus, Myro, Polycletus, in statuary and sculpture. Then also arose all her great musicians, whose names only are handed down to us, as their works have perished. But with the life of Demosthenes ended the liberties of Greece; oratory became mute, and the arts vanished.

Nothing can serve more strongly to illustrate and prove the point proposed, than to observe the amazing similarity which there was between the fate of the arts, in Rome, and in Greece. It was in the time of Hortensius and Cicero that oratory reached it's summit; and the same æra gave birth to all the admired artists of Rome. During that period flourished, or were trained up, all their great poets; Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Catullus, Tibullus, Ovid, Phædrus, Cornelius Gallus, and many more, equally admired in those times, tho' their works did not happen to escape the devastations of barbarians; such as Fundanius, Pollio, and Varius; whose merits we can not doubt of, when celebrated by the candid  
and

and judicious Horace. At that time arose Julius Cæsar, Livy, Sallust, &c. Then it was that Rome produced her Vitruvius, and all her eminent painters and sculptors. But after that, in Rome, as in Greece, with the loss of liberty, oratory declined, the arts drooped together with eloquence, and gradually sunk away. It may be here objected, that it was in the reign of Augustus, after the form of government had been changed, that the arts appeared in their highest lustre at Rome. But in answer to this let it be observed, that the artists themselves were all bred up during the most remarkable period of the republick, whose last blaze was it's brightest: at a time when all the faculties of the greatest minds were exerted to the utmost in defence of expiring liberty: when a Cato or a Brutus found proper opportunities to display that superior magnanimity, which has ever since rendered them objects of admiration to the whole world: when Cicero found subjects adequate to his mighty talents, and when oratory shone out from it's full meridian, and the study of eloquence was universal. As there

could not possibly have been a more happy juncture for the raising and cultivation of early genius, so the season that succeeded was of all others the best fitted to make it flourish and produce fruit. The long and peaceable reign of Augustus; his great liberality, and nice discernment, together with that of his minister, in rewarding merit; must have made every artist exert his talents to the utmost. But tho' this due encouragement produced such wonders in the works of those who had been already formed, yet it had not power to raise any new ones. Nor was there afterwards a single instance of any masterly performance, which was the work of a person born and bred up during his reign, or those of his successors; the best of them being only copies of those great originals: A plain and demonstrative proof, that the fountain which nursed and invigorated those great geniuses was dried up. If a concurrence of moral causes could have been able to have raised the arts from their seeds to maturity, there never had been a period which promised so plentiful a crop. And tho' it may be said,

said, that the tempestuous weather during the cruel and bloody reigns of Nero and some of his successors, might for a time have blighted and stopped their growth; yet what cause can be assigned that they did not revive and flourish under the settled calm, warm sunshine, and genial skies, of five such successive reigns as those of Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius?

When we consider, that previous to the perfection of oratory in Greece, there was no instance of any excellent performance in any of the liberal arts, the works of Homer alone excepted; and that in Rome there was not one example: that after the abolition of oratory in both countries, there never was any thing masterly produced in either: when we reflect, that the liberal arts never rose to any height in any country of the globe where oratory was not studied and practised; and that, in those countries where oratory was cultivated, they grew and flourished, declined and perished as that did: we can not but conclude that there must be a near and intimate connexion between them, and that



the one has a necessary dependence upon the other.

From the above state of the case one of the two following conclusions must evidently be deduced; either, 'that the perfection of oratory was the cause of the perfection of the liberal arts; or, that the perfection of the liberal arts was the cause of the perfection of oratory.' The former opinion seems to be supported by fact, as it has been clearly shewn that the rise of oratory was always previous to that of the arts: let us now see how it can be maintained and confirmed from the reason and nature of things. In order to do this, I shall first endeavour to shew, that this opinion is founded upon the highest degree of probability, by making it appear that it was much more easy for oratory, and by means more natural, to raise and support the liberal arts, than that the liberal arts should have power to raise and support oratory. In the second place I shall endeavour to establish it upon certain proof, that it is almost impossible that those arts should arrive at perfection without the aid and assistance of oratory.

C H A P.

## CHAP. V.

*That it is much more probable that oratory raised and supported the liberal arts, than that the liberal arts raised and supported oratory.*

EVERY one, who at all considers the point, must at once see, that in oratory alone are contained the principles of all the other arts; and that to form a compleat orator, the talents of a poet, painter, and musician, are absolutely necessary: so that the perfection of that one art, would of course afford supplies to the others, and bring them to maturity. Whereas, on a contrary principle, oratory must wait for it's perfection, 'till each of the other arts had reached theirs, and flourished all together: a circumstance not very likely to happen, as they have by no means so near a connection with each other (tho' somewhat allied) that the progress of the one should of course introduce that of the other. *Frustra fit per plura quod fieri potest per pauciora*, is an undoubted

doubted axiom. And surely it is more rational to account for different effects from the energy of one cause, if they may be allowed naturally to flow from it, than to attribute one effect to the united power of various causes, which have no necessary union amongst themselves. The variety of colours is much more easily accounted for, by supposing that they reside in the rays of light (which has indeed been proved) than in the several objects. And this method of reasoning must ever be allowed to be the most probable, when not contradicted by facts. But there is also another argument to be drawn in support of this opinion, from the very nature of these arts, and the manner in which they operate, that will amount to something equivalent to proof. All arts are accomplished and ended either in a work, or an energy. A work is that whose parts are co-existent, and the perfection of whose essence depends upon their remaining in the same state. An energy is that, whose parts exist only in succession, and which hath its very being in transition. Thus a statue and a picture are works, as are also a poem and  
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a musical composition, when reduced to writing and notes, as their parts in that case become co-existent and fixed. But dancing, playing on any instrument, and speaking or reciting, are only energies. Hence it will follow, when the production of any art is an energy, that the perfection of the art can be only perceived during that energy, and must also of necessity be co-eval with the artist. Thus the delicate touches and masterly hand of a musical performer can be only heard during the action of his playing, must end when that ceases, and necessarily finish with his life. Thus also the animated looks, enforcing gesture, and expressive tones of the orator, can be known only to his immediate spectators and hearers; and, except such part of them as is impressed on the memories of those, must necessarily perish with himself. But the case is quite otherwise in regard to works, the perfection of which is not visible during the energy, but only after it. It is not 'till the painter, the statuary, and the poet, have put their last hand to their pieces, that they are said to be finished, or their full beauty

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perceived. After that, they have no connection with the fate of the artist, but may remain to perpetuity when he himself is no more. When this consideration has had it's due weight, upon a supposition that the liberal arts borrowed their aids and supplies from oratory, we shall no longer be at a loss for a reason why there were no more excellent artists to be found in any of those, when there were no longer any good orators subsisting. But on the contrary supposition, that oratory drew it's supplies from the liberal arts, there can be no reason assigned why many excellent orators might not at any time have arisen, since the compositions, and works, of the several artists still remained in equal perfection, and consequently equally capable of affording them all proper lights and assistance. But why should we suppose that these several works should be able to produce great masters in a distinct art, when they were not capable of raising any in their own several kinds? It would be more natural to think that a number of excellent compositions in poetry, musick, and painting, should serve as models to  
form

form good poets, masters of musick, and painters, each being wholly employed in the study and practice of his own art, than that finished orators should be produced from the difficult and laborious study of all three; and yet we find that they were far from being equal even to this. Seneca, who wrote in the reign immediately succeeding that of Augustus, complains heavily of the great depravity of taste, and visible decay in all the arts: and Quinctilian, sixty years after the decease of that prince, wrote an express treatise on the causes of the decay of Roman eloquence. He has also shewn us in many places, that the other arts were equally in a low state. Since therefore we find it indubitably proved that the arts always rose, flourished, and declined with oratory, why may we not conclude with confidence, that it was from oratory alone that they all drew their supplies? But as it may be said that all which has been advanced upon this subject will at most only amount to a strong presumptive proof, I shall now endeavour to shew, that it is almost impossible for the liberal arts to reach

reach perfection, or flourish to any great degree, without the aid of oratory, and the supplies which they draw from thence. In order to do this it will be necessary to trace the principles upon which the perfection of those arts is founded. Let us therefore take a survey of poetry, musick, and painting, with this view; since whatever relates to sculpture and statuary will come under the last head.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of Poetry, Musick, and Painting, and their Source.*

**T**HESE arts are all founded upon one common principle, which is imitation. They differ from each other only in the subjects which they are severally capable of imitating, and in the instruments, or *media*, made use of to display that power. Painting, for instance, can imitate only thro' the *media* of figure and colour, and is therefore confined to such subjects as are peculiarly characterised by those. Musick, for the same reason, is limited

mitted to such only as depend upon motion and sound: whilst poetry, working by the medium of words, which by compact stand for symbols of all our ideas, can imitate as far as language can express; and that in a manner includes all things.

As the fundamental point in all these arts is imitation, it is evident that, without that, they can have no merit, or rather indeed can not subsist. But the most perfect imitation in the world is not of itself sufficient to stamp a value upon a work, which must ever be considered with relation to the subject or thing imitated, and be rated in proportion to the merit of that. For tho' the chief object of the artist himself be imitation, and he has certainly arrived at perfection in every work, where he has been able to produce an exact resemblance; yet the world, who are to rate the merit of the piece, will not confine themselves merely to the skill of the artist, but will take into the value, circumstances of delight, and profit, which arise from qualities inherent in the original subject. Hence it is plain, that in all these arts there is an absolute and relative perfection. The

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absolute depends upon the exact similitude of the copy to the original, of whatever kind it be; the relative, upon the choice of the subject, as well as accuracy of resemblance. As the last is that which ascertains the value of works, it is therefore chiefly to be attended to by all artists.

The great ends of all these arts, being the same with those of oratory, viz, 'to delight, to move, and to instruct,' (under which last head I include every thing which tends to better the heart as well as to improve the understanding) these points should be constantly kept in view both in the choice of subjects, and in the manner of handling them. Whence it must follow, that all subjects for imitation taken from human nature, and all means to display them borrowed from that, must with mankind obtain a preference, and have a stronger influence than from the whole universe besides. Nature itself has implanted in us a particular attraction to our own species, which is visible in all animals; and endued the heart with a kind of instinctive sensibility to certain sounds and tones, as well as looks and gestures, which  
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have a natural expreffion in them, independent of words, and which may be confidered as the univerfal language of the paffions, equally underftood by all the different nations of the earth. Nothing therefore can delight or move the heart of man fo much as a lively representation of the actions and fufferings of others, arifing from qualities to which he finds fomething congenial in himfelf. And what instruction can be of fuch advantage to him, as that which improves him in the knowlege of human nature, the ufe whereof he muft daily and hourly experience in every action of his life?

We find that by common confent mankind have agreed to rate the value of works by this ftandard. Thus the epick and dramattick poetry have obtained the firft place, in preference to the lyrick, epigrammatick, and all writings of wit and fancy. Thus the hiftory painter has an allowed fuperiority over thofe who draw landfcapcs, animals, flowers, and the whole tribe of inanimate beings. In mufick alfo, they who make ufe of that art, as an adjunct to poetry, and by that means

render it capable of moving the passions, and of impressing sentiments more strongly on the mind, are preferred to those, whose compositions only serve to please the ear, or charm the fancy. In this also the human voice is confessedly preeminent over all musical instruments, whose power of moving and pleasing the heart and ear, is in proportion to their near resemblance to that.

We find also, that amongst the masters in the several imitative arts who chuse human nature for their object, there is a distinction of rank in proportion to the dignity and importance of their subjects. Thus the writer of epick poetry, who relates the actions of kings and heroes, and displays all the more elevated and sublime qualities of the human mind, together with the more exalted and noble passions, is placed at a great distance above the writers of pastorals and elegies. For the same reason the tragick poet is preferred to the comick. Thus the painter of famous and remarkable historical actions, is in higher estimation, than he who is only employed about portraits, or conversa-

versation pieces in common life. And thus the composers of operas, masques, oratorio's, &c. are of a higher order, than they who only set single songs, cantatas, or dialogues, to musick. This being premised, let us now examine the points which are necessary to enable each artist in his several way, to arrive at the highest degree of perfection whereof his art is capable, and to be ranked in the foremost class.

To the completion of an artist, four things are chiefly necessary, genius, application, proper subjects, and suitable instruments to work with. Supposing therefore an equality as to the two first requisites, in persons born in different countries or ages, let us see how far their works will be affected, and rise up to, or fall short of perfection, in proportion to their opportunities of being supplied with the latter.

All imitation necessarily supposes a subject, or thing imitated, and must therefore ever be considered with relation to that; otherwise it changes it's nature, and loses it's very essence.



The perfection of imitation consists in the exactness of similitude to the thing imitated. Whence it evidently follows that it must partake of all the good and bad qualities of it's subject; that it must be beautiful, or deformed, give pleasure, or disgust, in proportion as that would.

As all transcripts are formed from impressions made on the imagination, the stronger those impressions are, the more lively and similar will the transcripts be. Now nothing contributes so much to the strength of impressions, as the frequent and reiterated action of the objects upon the senses, thro' which they are stamped on the imagination, and sink deeper at every new stroke. As their similitude depends much upon this, so the beauty of their form, and the symmetry of their parts in the copies, must ever be determined by those qualities in the originals. Whence we must conclude, that all such artists (supposing an equality of genius and application) as have the most frequent opportunities of seeing and examining the best and most perfect subjects, will necessarily

farily produce works of the strongest resemblance, and greatest excellence.

Here it is to be observed, that I speak all along of real artists; whose works are an immediate transcript from nature; and are therefore dignified with the name of originals, in contradistinction to the mechanical labours of copyists, who content themselves with a servile imitation of the manner of those masters; and whose productions, as they do not proceed from a warm imagination, strongly impressed by the energetick power of nature, but from a cold observation of artificial rules; so, tho' they may be possessed even of a scrupulous similarity, and raise analogous ideas, yet they are deprived of all power of moving and affecting. The impressions made by them last no longer than whilst they are seen: in the same manner as a man views his own image exactly displayed in a mirror, *but when he goeth away, straightway forgetteth what manner of man he is.*

After the subjects, the next things which come to be considered are the instruments, or media, by means whereof the

images and ideas which are in the brain of the artist, are submitted to the senses of others; and without which he can do nothing. Here it must at once be evident, that the skill of the artist must appear in a greater or less degree, in proportion to the degrees of perfection in his instruments, and aptitude to their end. For whatever ideas he may have himself, he can not communicate any beyond what is in the power of those instruments to shew. Thus in poetry, a writer can not compose harmonious verses in a language of which the words have a discordant and disagreeable sound: the painter who has but a few colours, must be confined only to such objects as they are capable of representing: and the musician must be restrained in his compositions, to such notes as are within the compass of his instrument. Hence it will follow, that a poet who writes in a language well adapted to poetical numbers, must have an advantage over one, who has a dissonant and unpleasant tongue to struggle with: that a painter who has the art of blending colours, so as to form as great a variety as  
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are to be found in the works of nature, has a much larger field to display his talents in, than he who is confined to a few: and that the musical composer may shew infinite powers in his art, by means of instruments of proper force and compass, which can not be at all displayed by one, whose instruments are poor and confined.

Let us now apply these rules to the several imitative arts; from which it will appear, that the masters in those, whose chief business it is to give a lively and beautiful representation of human nature, in it's most exalted and graceful point of view, must of necessity have had the highest advantage, by means of living in those countries, and in those periods of time, when oratory was at it's height, over all other artists in the world, of every other age and country. And we shall see the reason why it is almost impossible that perfect transcripts of that kind could have been produced at any other juncture, thro' the want of proper subjects, or suitable instruments.

And first as to poetry. The instrument of the poets is language, and their



works must be proportionably perfect, or defective, as that is. In regard to this point, we have already shewn, both from fact, and the reason of things, that the study and practice of oratory alone could bring language to perfection. It was to the orators therefore that the poets of all denominations were obliged for the use and improvement of an instrument perfectly adapted to all their several purposes; as well as for instructions in the art of managing it with ease and dexterity. But the epick and tragick writers, in whose works the dignity of human nature was to be displayed, as well as all the more exalted passions and affections, must have been chiefly indebted to them for the principal excellence of their art. Their great ends are, *to move, to delight, to instruct*; and from whom could they learn the power to do all these so effectually, as from the orator; who must so far fail of his point, as he falls short in any of those ends; and whose constant practice pointed out the means by which those were to be attained? Where could they have such opportunities of drawing the passions from the life, as in those

those assemblies where they were perpetually to be seen both in their causes and effects? From what school could they learn the art of giving suitable sentiments, proper diction, and becoming deportment to their exalted characters, which they could have but few opportunities of observing in life, so well as that of oratory; where they might see men of the most elevated genius displaying all the highest faculties of the mind, upon the most important subjects? Where they had constant models before them of the most animated nature, under the guidance of the best regulated art? It is easy to see how much all writers in prose, whether of history, or any thing else relative to human affairs, must have been indebted to that for the ornamental parts of their works, as this is visible enough in the many excellent orations to be found in the antient writers.

Secondly, as to musick. The great end and use of musick is to move, and by stirring the passions to give delight. For considered as a mere sensual gratification, it is of no sort of benefit, and it's effect is to the last degree transient. It was to answer the  
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former purpose, that the antients employed their whole skill in that art. They considered it therefore chiefly as an assistant to poetry, and in the construction of their instruments they had that point principally in view. As an adjunct to poetry, it's great force must depend upon expression: and expression must be borrowed from the various sounds and tones which nature has annexed, to the various passions; but still under the regulation of art, as to the proper proportions and degrees suited to the occasion. The human voice, or the instruments which approached nearest to it, were of course the most capable of producing this effect. From whom therefore could the musical composer acquire such skill in this respect as from the orator, to whom it was absolutely necessary that he should be able to express all the different passions in their natural and suitable tones and sounds? And how finely and properly must these have come prepared to the composer, when heard from the tuneful and well-modulated voice of a finished speaker? It was from this example that the musician learned the complete management of his art,

art, as described by Quintilian. *Namque & voce & modulatione, grandia elate, jucunda dulciter, moderata leniter canit, totaque arte consentit cum eorum, quae dicuntur, affectibus.* With such aids and such subjects for imitation, we need no longer wonder at the amazing effects which are recorded to have been produced by antient musick, nor the extraordinary power which it had over the passions: a power equal (if we may believe the concurrent testimony of many historians, and other writers) to the fancied description of it in Dryden's ode. Nor shall we be at a loss to account for this, when we consider the mighty force of oratorical expression alone: what then must it be, when conveyed to the heart with all the superadded powers and charms of musick? No person of sensibility, who has had the good fortune to hear Mrs. Cibber sing in the oratorio of the Messiah, will find it very difficult to give credit to accounts of the most wonderful effects produced from so powerful a union. And yet it was not to any extraordinary powers of voice (whereof she has but a very moderate share) nor to a greater



greater degree of skill in musick (wherein many of the Italians must be allowed to exceed her) that she owed her excellence, but to expression only; her acknowledged superiority in which could proceed from nothing but skill in her profession. What has been said may serve clearly to point out the reason why the musick of the antients was upon the whole far superior to that of the moderns; notwithstanding it must be granted that our instruments have great advantages over theirs; and that our musick, considered as a single and distinct science, has been carried to a much higher pitch of perfection than probably it ever was amongst them. The chief end which the antients had in view, was it's utility in stirring the passions, rousing the affections, and giving them a proper direction. This could never effectually be accomplished but by making it an adjunct to poetry; and as an adjunct to poetry it must obtain it's chief force from expression, it's chief delight from melody. The completion of their whole point was therefore finished in the accomplishment of those two; and this

being their *summum*, they seldom turned their thoughts to consider how far the powers of musick might be carried as a separate art. But the case of the moderns was quite otherwise. With the springs of oratory, was also dried up the source of expression in this art, when used as an ally to poetry. As they found it impossible therefore to arrive at any great degree of excellence in that respect, they changed their object, and employed their whole thoughts in considering it's separate powers; and their labours, in endeavouring to bring it to the highest degree of perfection, of which in it's own nature it was singly capable. With this view they applied themselves assiduously to the improvement of the old, and the invention of new instruments, which might be capable of displaying the whole powers and variety of harmony: and their works have since chiefly tended to display the whole powers, and variety of those instruments. In this respect they have perhaps gone as great lengths, and accomplished their point as effectually, as the antients. But if to move the passions,  
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and thereby to better the heart, be an end in itself of more use and importance, than merely to gratify the ear or amuse the fancy, the antient musick must surely be of a superior rank to the modern. To be convinced of this, we need only consider the effects which are naturally produced by the two different kinds. The best musical imitation can, of itself, only excite ideas similar and analogous to such as are in the mind of the composer, and which are as evanescent as the sounds which excite them: nor can it's effect be at all greater or more durable in moving the passions. But when it is annexed to poetry, the ideas raised by it are exactly the same, and are fixed on the memory by permanent marks: the passions also are not only roused and put in motion, but acquire duration by being associated to the images of poetry, and are directed to proper ends by the sentiments. Indeed the natural superiority of this kind of musick over the other, can not be more fully proved, than by the general preference which it has obtained amongst us, even in it's very imperfect and defective state.

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The instrumental musick is universally held in lower estimation than the vocal, notwithstanding that the compositions in the former must be allowed to be more perfect in their kind, and it must be granted that the masters have attained their end more completely, than in the latter. The imperfection of the modern vocal musick clearly arises from a want of proper expression: nor shall we have cause to wonder that this defect is so general, when we consider that in order to be able to produce that, a composer should completely understand the whole art of eloquence. For how should he be able to give the proper cadence to words by means of musical notes, or annex suitable sounds expressive of the passions, who does not know how to lay the right emphasis in reading or repeating those very words, or to enforce the sentiments by the natural tones of voice? The total and general want of skill in that art, has been the cause that the composers of vocal musick have been under a necessity of giving up what ought to be their chief object, and of making their end the same

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with that of the instrumental. They consider the human voice therefore in the light merely of an instrument, and employ their whole art and skill only in shewing the compass and various inflections of that, and content themselves with the superiority which the mere powers of the organ, together with the natural energy of it's operations upon the kindred senses of the hearers, give to their works, preferably to those which are displayed by artificial instruments. So that both kinds of musick have now one common object, that of charming the ear, and amusing the fancy; and the superiority of the one over the other has only resulted from it's natural qualities, and fitness to answer those ends. The necessity brought upon the composer of vocal musick of changing his object, and making his end the same with that of the instrumental, may be made sufficiently apparent from a due consideration of the following circumstance. Let us suppose a master were to arise, who with immense pains should make himself well skilled in expression, and in all his compositions should consider that

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as the chief point ; would not all his labours be fruitless, unless he could find performers equally well skilled in that art with himself ? For if the fingers were not able to enter into the spirit of the work, and to produce the whole force of expression, according to the design of the artist, the composition must fail of it's great end, that of moving the heart. When that end is missed, the chief excellence of the work is of course not perceived, and in this case nothing remains to be considered but it's other qualities, of pleasing the ear and flattering the imagination. In these respects, as it must necessarily be much confined, and circumscribed in narrow bounds, by the main object, when it comes to be compared with compositions where the full reins are given to fancy, it must appear infinitely inferior, and be rated accordingly. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the works of the greatest musical genius that this country has produced. Purcell, tho' not the inventor of the English musick, yet was the great improver of it ; and had it been cultivated with care since

his time, we might perhaps claim a superiority over all the moderns. He clearly saw that the chief object of vocal music ought to be expression. This was therefore what he principally attended to in his compositions, and he carried the point much farther than could have been expected from the weak lights and assistances which he met with in those times. Had he lived in the illustrious ages of old Greece or Rome, it is more than probable, from the immensity of his genius, and the aids and advantages which he might have had then to improve it to the utmost, that he might have been ranked amongst their foremost artists. During his life, the beauty of his works might have been perceived, and his reputation proportionably raised, as he had an opportunity of instructing the performers, *viva voce*, in the manner of singing them according to their true spirit. But since his death, by means of a total ignorance in the singers as to the article of expression, they have gradually sunk away in their estimation, and are now almost buried in oblivion. In a century or two more,

more, unless a true taste should revive, they will probably be wholly obliterated, and the memorial of them remain no more upon earth. The same cause may serve fully to account for the total annihilation of the antient musick, insomuch that not the least traces of it were handed down to posterity, except the figures of their instruments preserved on medals, basso relievos, and other pieces of sculpture. When musick flourished in those countries, the composers, as well as performers, were all regularly trained in the study and practice of elocution; for, as it has been before observed, without a knowledge of that art, they could never have displayed excellence in their own, which depended chiefly on expression. This art therefore necessarily sunk with that of eloquence, and lost all it's charms. The preservation of the notes of a composition, was only the preservation of their powers as to mere sound; but their force and beauty in point of expression, could never be pointed out by any visible marks, without the assistance of a master's voice. The true powers therefore of such marks could



be as little known to posterity, in musical compositions, as the true use of the accents in the works of the Greek poets and orators. As therefore the great beauty of their vocal musick was lost, and as they had never carried their instrumental to any great height, nothing remained in the whole art worthy of much pains to preserve it, and consequently it was easily swept away and drowned in the torrent of barbarism. Nor ought this to appear at all surprising to us when we reflect, that beside the instance before mentioned of Purcel, whose reputation, tho' he lived so near our own times, is amazingly sunk, we have examples also in our great old masters Tallis, Lawes, and Blow, whose names are now scarce known to the publick. These three, like Purcel, had expression for their object, and on that account their works have shared the same fate. Nor should we probably at this day have any traces of their compositions remaining, were not some of them employed in the church service : where, thro' a false taste in the performers, and a total inability to give them their due force of expression,

tion, they lose the greatest part of their beauty, and consequently must in time be supplanted by others more adapted to the prevailing taste.

I shall finish this head with a quotation from the abbot Gravina, wherein the judgement which he passed upon the Italian musick, whose superiority over all the modern kinds is generally allowed, affords a strong confirmation of what I have advanced upon this subject. He says,  
 ‘ \* The musick which we hear now on  
 ‘ our stages, is far from producing the  
 ‘ same effects as that of the antients. In-  
 ‘ stead of imitating and expressing the  
 ‘ meaning of the words, it contributes  
 ‘ only to enervate and choak it : where-  
 ‘ fore it is as disagreeable to those who  
 ‘ have a justness of taste, as it is pleasing  
 ‘ to such as differ from reason. In fact,  
 ‘ vocal musick ought to imitate the na-  
 ‘ tural language of the human passions,  
 ‘ rather than the singing of canary birds,  
 ‘ which our musick affects so vastly to  
 ‘ mimick with it’s quaverings and boasted  
 ‘ cadences : Tho’ we have at present a

\* Abbate Gravina della tragedia.

‘ very skilful musician, and a man of  
‘ good sense, who is not carried away with  
‘ the torrent. But our poetry having been  
‘ corrupted by the excess of ornaments  
‘ and figures, the contagion has spread it-  
‘ self into our musick. ’Tis the fate of all  
‘ arts, which have a common origin and  
‘ object, that the infection passes from  
‘ one to the other. Our musick is there-  
‘ fore so loaded at present with trifles and  
‘ gewgaws, that we can hardly trace any  
‘ remains of the natural expression. Nor,  
‘ tho’ it flatters the ear, is it therefore fit  
‘ for tragedy; because the imitation and  
‘ expression of the inarticulate language  
‘ of the passions is the chief merit of  
‘ dramatick musick. If our musick is  
‘ still agreeable to us, ’tis because we know  
‘ no better, and it tickles the ear, which  
‘ it does in common with the warbling of  
‘ goldfinches and nightingales. It resem-  
‘ bles those Chinese pictures which have  
‘ no imitation of nature, and are only  
‘ pleasing by reason of the vivacity and va-  
‘ riety of their colours.’

Thirdly, as to painting. Here it must  
at once occur, that as the business of the  
his-

history-painter is to represent human nature in a manner which shall be at once graceful and expressive, when animated by all it's variety of passions and affections; and that, in order to do this, he must be able to give all the various configurations of the muscles of the face, together with the whole deportment of the body, and action of the limbs, which are the natural concomitant signs of those passions; and all these must be in the most exact degree of due proportion; he could no where meet with such perfect subjects as amongst the orators. There he would find the most complete models ready to his hand, not only of the most animated expression, but also of the most graceful; not only of the most natural and forcible action, but also of the most becoming, and such as was regulated by the nicest art. Nor is it possible to conceive any look, attitude, or gesture, which the painter might have occasion for in all the several styles, whether of the grand, the terrible, the graceful, the tender, the passionate, the joyous; whether expressive of the more furious and violent passions, as anger, hatred, &c. or of the more calm



and pleasing, as of pity, joy, &c. which he might not have frequent opportunities of catching warm from the life in the endless variety of subjects treated of by an impassioned orator. From whom could an Apelles borrow the tender, and the gracefull, so well as from the man whose power of persuasion was irresistible? From whom the grand, and terrible, so well as from

- \* ' Those antient—whose resistless elo-  
     ' quence
- ' Wiielded at will that fierce democratic,
- ' Shook th' arsenal, and fulmined over  
     ' Greece
- ' To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne.'

How could a Phidias have given such suitable forms to the creatures of fancy; how could he so justly have framed an image of the god of wit and eloquence, as by a faithful transcript from a Pericles, in whose lips the Graces were said to inhabit? Or how could he have made so august a statue of a Jupiter *Tonans*, as from a representation of the same Pericles, when at other times he was said to 'thunder and lighten in the assembly of the

• Paradise regained,

' peo-

‘ people ?’ Nor did the orators afford to the painters patterns for imitation in themselves only, they likewise opened whole volumes, wherein they might study the passions at large in all their several modifications, by means of the strong impressions made by their harangues upon their auditors ; who, in proportion to their several degrees of sensibility were all actuated and inflamed, and must therefore have afforded an infinite variety of objects, as well as degrees of passion, from which a judicious observer might cull what would best suit his purpose. An artist in those times might have had a better opportunity of seeing all the nobler passions fully and properly displayed, and in a greater variety of subjects, in one single day, than he could now in a whole life spent in the search, or from an observation of such subjects as casually fall in his way. Indeed the advantage which the painters of those times must have had, by these means, over all who succeeded them, is so very obvious, that it would favour of useless declamation to enlarge further upon this head,

## C H A P. VII.

*That it is almost impossible that the masters in these several arts should arrive at perfection, without the lights and assistance borrowed from oratory.*

**T**O begin with painting. It has already been made appear, that no one can be a master in that art, who can not exhibit a just view of the various looks and gestures which are the natural concomitant signs of the several passions and affections: that this view must not only be expressive, but exact in the degrees of expression given to each passion, suited to the occasion; without which, tho' it may have force, it will be void of propriety: and lastly, that this view must be taken immediately from life, and not from the works of other artists. Here it must be observed, that as there is a natural and artificial language, so there is also a natural and artificial action. By natural language I mean the inarticulate tones which nature herself has given to the passions, and  
which

which are equally well understood by all persons of all nations. Thus the cries and shrieks of a foreigner in distress move the human heart as much, and as instinctively draw people to his assistance, as those of a compatriot : and thus laughter, and all expressions of joy and merriment, excite the same emotions in people of different nations. These natural sounds in some degree accompany all the passions, tho' they are more or less perceptible, in proportion as those are more violent, or moderate. By artificial language is meant those arbitrary marks affixed to ideas by different nations, and which having no natural connexion with them, are only intelligible to the natives of each country, or those who study their speech. In the same manner there is also a natural and an artificial action. The natural, is that which spontaneously results from the emotions of the heart, and to which nature has annexed a power indicative of the passions. The artificial is that which, like the words of a language, has no natural congruity with the passions or sentiments, but has it's foundation in caprice  
and



and fashion, and is by custom annexed to certain modes of expression in particular countries ; it is therefore intelligible only to the natives of those countries, and consequently can have no force but with them, or such as are sufficiently conversant with them to acquire a knowledge of their meaning. Now as in all cases it is known, that nature must give way to the power of mode and fashion, it often happens that this artificial action, tho' directly opposite to the natural, is established in it's room, so that no traces of the latter remain. And this must necessarily be the case in all nations where no care is taken to cultivate and support natural action. For if art be not employed as a handmaid to nature, she will ever make herself mistress. When judgement and industry sleep, caprice and idleness seize the reins. If we take a view of the different nations of Europe, we shall find that artificial action has almost universally supplanted the natural ; and that people of the several countries do not differ more from each other in their speech, than in their gestures. Thus the French, who are of an airy volatile nature,

ture, accompany almost every word with grimace, and use a deal of action when discoursing on the most trifling subjects : whilst the proud Spaniard has habitually subdued all muscular motion, which he thinks inconsistent with his dignity, and preserves as much as possible, upon all occasions, an inflexibility of countenance, and an unmoved gravity of deportment. The English in general, who have more liberty than any other people, and amongst whom, from this unbounded freedom, every one follows his own humour as his guide, have almost as many species of action as there are individuals in the country ; excepting only some religious sects amongst them, who have adopted certain modes of looks and deportment peculiar to themselves, which run thro' the different bodies, and make them appear as distinct from the rest of their countrymen, as if the island were inhabited by different nations. Such, for instance, are the more rigid quakers : from an observation of the countenance, gait and gesture, of the members in which sect, one would think that they were all cast in the same mould, or  
cut

cut out by the same pattern. These, like the Spaniards, have also subdued by habit all visible marks of emotion, except when they give way to absurd, unnatural, and wild gestures, proceeding from the fancied operations of the spirit; and in these also they generally resemble each other, and are always moved by the spirit in the same manner. But amongst the rest of the people, there are hardly two to be found who accompany their thoughts with actions exactly similar. Those are generally taken up by chance, and confirmed by habit, and become in time so much a part of a man's self that he uses them involuntarily, and applies them indiscriminately to all sorts of subjects, only with more or less vehemence, according as he himself is more or less actuated. Things being in this situation, I should be glad to know where any modern artist could possibly find living subjects from which he might copy true natural expression, and action? If a Spanish painter were to draw a history piece, and borrow his figures from such life as he is conversant with in his own country, tho' the piece might

might even seem natural and excellent to the unstudied and untravelled natives, yet to persons of all other countries it must appear to be devoid both of meaning and grace. Were a Frenchman to draw after nature in his country, his piece might appear there to have both force and beauty to the illiterate; but in other places it must be considered only as a groupe of frantick and unmeaning figures. And if we bring it home to ourselves, we shall find the case infinitely worse in regard to our painters. For tho' in those countries the expression and action of countenance and limbs be for the most part artificial, yet the same kind being generally used upon the same occasions, by all persons of the same rank in life and breeding, it becomes perfectly intelligible to all who are conversant with them, and a representation of it is as well understood as their speech, by the natives, and those who reside any time amongst them. But in England, except amongst the common people, with whom such pains have not been taken to suppress all visible emotions of nature, by what is commonly called



good breeding, there is no general action either natural or artificial, sufficiently used to characterise the sentiments and passions in a representation taken from the life, even to us at home; much less can it be intelligible to our neighbours. People do not differ more from one another here in their physiognomy, than they do in their action. Every individual has something peculiar to himself, which proceeds either from his humour, or mere chance and custom; and when there is any thing singular or odd in it, there is no farther notice taken of it than to say, Oh! that is Mr. such-a-one's way. Now I should be glad to know what a genius in painting, superior even to the greatest of the ancients, who happened to be born, and to pass his life in this country, could possibly do, thus circumstanced? He can not produce any perfect work which is not taken from life; and the things which he wants chiefly to take from life, he can never see. Let us suppose such an artist, born with all the talents necessary to form a history painter, searching about for proper subjects from which he might bor-

borrow impassioned looks, forcible gesture, and graceful attitudes, in order to give life to the figures in his piece, and to unite in the whole, propriety, grace, and expression. If he goes to the senate-house, he may perhaps see there a British orator haranguing upon the fate of the nation, and the liberties of Europe, with great good sense indeed, and in well-chosen words, worthy to be read several times over when reduced to writing; but with less emotion than a Frenchman would speak of discomposing his perriwig. This excellent discourse is perhaps delivered with his hands in his bosom; or if decorated with action, it is only such as results from habit, and of which he is at the time unconscious; such as playing with his hat, fumbling in his pockets, settling his perriwig, tossing or twisting his head, and see-sawing his body. If he goes from thence to the bar, he will hardly fare much better. There he may hear a long and eloquent piece of pleading delivered with an unmoved composure of countenance, and the orator perhaps twirling a piece of pack-thread round his fingers,

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which

which is humorously called in the Spectator the thread of his discourse; or else every now and then filling up his pauses, by applying his nosegay to his nostrils. Since the use of tobacco indeed, some of the younger sort have found a great subsidium to the gracefulness of their action, by the proper management of the snuff-box. As to the pulpit, I believe I need hardly mention that he would find little or no assistance there, unless it were for pieces of still life. If from an observation of the orators he reaps so little benefit, he will hardly find any from their several auditories; who certainly can discover no more emotion than what is excited by the speakers. I do not mean, but that in all these places there may be found several of superior talents, who do not fall into these puerilities, and improprieties of gesture and behaviour; but it will be no very confident assertion, to affirm that even the best of those, possessed of the strongest natural talents, on account of the want of opportunities of studying an art, which of all others requires the most pains, will hardly be able to afford in themselves,  
per-

perfect patterns for imitation, of grace, propriety, and energy of expression, in their countenance and action. And this may serve to shew the reason why England never yet has, and probably never will, if things should remain in their present situation, produce a good history painter. Several have acquitted themselves well in landscapes, animals, flowers, and the representation of all such things as they could immediately copy from nature; and have therein fallen short of their neighbours, only so far as their opportunities of making themselves masters of the mechanical part of their profession were inferior. Some also have shewn themselves excellent masters of expression in scenes of low life, drawn from living objects, amongst whom the language of the passions had not been effaced by art. Such are many of the performances of the celebrated Hogarth. Now what reason can be assigned, that they should not be as well able to delineate the various outward configurations, produced by the nobler and more exalted passions, provided they could find as good subjects



in life to take them from, and had as frequent opportunities of observing them? From the same principles we may conclude, that no other country in Europe can possibly produce real artists in that way. For as they can no where find grace, propriety and expression, of action, attitude, and look, in living subjects, they can only search for them in the remains of the antient artists; and consequently can at best be but copyists. The standard of nature being now every where lost, the remains of antiquity are the sole archetypes to which the compositions of the moderns are referred: which obtain a comparative value in proportion to their near approaches to the style and manner of those. Hence it will follow, that they who have the most free access and frequent opportunities of studying and observing those originals, must (*cæteris paribus*) obtain the first place, and that they who form themselves only upon the works of these copiers, must be of an inferior rank. Every successive impression taken from an impression, must be weaker than the former; and the performance of a copier taken

taken from one who was himself a copyist, must be considered as a reflection from a reflection, or an echo from an echo; every successive repetition of which must grow fainter and fainter. And this may possibly serve as a solution why Italy has produced the greatest number, and the highest class of history painters, of any country in Europe; and Great Britain the fewest, and the least conspicuous of any, where that art has been at all cultivated.

What has been said in regard to painting, will hold equally good with respect to musick. As in the one, when artificial looks and gestures are substituted in a country in the room of such as are natural, the painter can have no proper subjects from which he can draw perfect representations of human nature; so in the other, where artificial tones and sounds are made to supply the voice of nature, the musical composer can have no archetypes from which to borrow just and forcible expression of the passions and sentiments. So that he is obliged either to give way to his fancy entirely in the various combinations of sounds; or, if he aims

at expression, it can be only of the artificial kind, which is used in his own country, and which containing no natural power, will not appear to foreign ears to have any force. And this may perhaps be the reason why some of the French operas are heard with such raptures by the natives, tho' they are even disgustful to strangers.

And as to poetry, besides the many advantages which it might derive from oratory, it has been already shewn, that the perfection of the poet's instrument, in the refinement of language, must be entirely owing to the study of eloquence. Nor is it possible that any poet can be master of expression in his numbers, who is unskilled in that art. Poetical expression consists in a proper combination and arrangement of syllables and words, which, if justly repeated, will produce certain tones and sounds ; now, if the poet does not know how to repeat even his own verses with propriety and grace (which is almost universally the case of all the modern writers) how is it possible that he can be a master of expression in numbers ?

Upon

Upon the least consideration it will appear, that it was in the very nature of oratory to supply these deficiencies, and prevent those deviations from nature which must of course affect the several imitative arts. The business of the orator was to move the passions of all sorts of auditors, without which he could not accomplish his end. Now it is evident, that the energy of nature, must have much more efficacy in this respect, than the power of art. It was therefore incumbent on the orator to preserve, as much as possible, all the various looks, gestures, and tones, which nature herself has annexed to the several passions and affections, to be a universal language, intelligible by all ranks and orders of people, of whatever age or country ; and the whole employment of art was only to regulate these in such a manner, as to exhibit them in their highest degree of beauty and grace, without robbing them of their force. The manner of the publick speakers would of course be imitated by their hearers, and the natural would become every where the fashionable action. Hence the artists in



such a country might every where find proper subjects for imitation ready to their hands. The compositions in those arts which imitate thro' natural *media*, such as musick, and painting, would be intelligible not at home only, but in all other countries, and their beauty be every where perceived. Their poetry also, which imitates only thro' an artificial *medium*, and consequently would be unintelligible to such as were not acquainted with the arbitrary signs made use of to express ideas in it, would, on account of the fame of the writers, be sought after by all those who had leisure and opportunity to acquire knowlege of those signs; and they would find their labour well rewarded, not only in the proposed end of understanding those pieces, but likewise in the delight which the very means of arriving at that end would afford them; I mean the pleasure which they must take in the contemplation and study of a beautiful language, polished and refined to the utmost.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Of the encouragements given to the several artists during the flourishing state of oratory.*

WHAT I have said above naturally leads me to the consideration of another point, which is of the utmost consequence in bringing the liberal arts to perfection; I mean the encouragement given to the several artists, in the rewards which attended their labours. These rewards are of two kinds; fame, and profit. When considered separately, the former is certainly the nobler motive to action, and the more likely to produce excellence in works; but neither of them can operate with such force distinctly, as when their powers are united. When fame is the motive, the more general and extended it is, the greater will it's influence be over the minds of such as aspire after it for a reward. A love of fame is of all others the strongest incentive to a generous mind, and is the most boundless in it's desires.

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desires. An artist, animated by that, is not contented with the praises of his own countrymen, he grasps at the applause of all his contemporaries in the different countries of the peopled globe; nor does he stop here, but looks greedily forward to all future generations; and nothing less will content him than a prospect of perpetuity to his works, or to his name. As such an unbounded view is the most likely to rouse and animate him to the utmost exertion of all his faculties, so nothing can so effectually induce him to labour and toil after the greatest accuracy and correctness in his compositions, which are to pass in review before such numbers of unbiassed judges. When the lesser motive of profit is prevalent with an artist, it need scarce be mentioned, that in proportion to the price which his works bear, he will be encouraged and stimulated in his labours. But in all rewards, whether of fame or profit, it is necessary that they should be distributed with the nicest judgement, and the most exact impartiality; without which, they not only lose their end, but become the highest discouragement-

couragements to real artists. The abbé Du Bos, in speaking of this subject, says :  
 ‘ If a sovereign distributes his favours im-  
 ‘ partially, they are an encouragement to  
 ‘ artists ; which they cease to be as soon  
 ‘ as they are misplaced. Nay, it would  
 ‘ be much better, were a sovereign not  
 ‘ to distribute any favours at all, than to  
 ‘ do it without judgement. An able artist  
 ‘ may find means to comfort himself un-  
 ‘ der the contempt and neglect into which  
 ‘ his art is fallen. A \* poet may even bear  
 ‘ with the disrelish people chance to have  
 ‘ for poetry ; but he is ready to burst with  
 ‘ envy and spite, when he sees a prize  
 ‘ given to works that are far inferior to  
 ‘ his own performances. He grows des-  
 ‘ perate at the sight of an injustice which  
 ‘ is a personal affront to him, and he re-  
 ‘ nounces, as much as in him lies, the  
 ‘ muses for ever.’

As I have already proved that the several artists had the highest opportunities, during the flourishing times of oratory, to improve their talents to the utmost ; so I shall now shew that they had also the

\* We have a strong instance of this in Milton.

highest

highest encouragements afterwards to display them: that the incentives were of the noblest kind; the rewards the greatest; and distributed with more judgement and impartiality, than could be expected in any other age and country. To begin with the highest of all incentives, that of fame. It has been already shewn, that they were not in this respect confined to their own country, but their works were every where sought after, and admired by the curious of all nations. Being transcripts from nature, they were intelligible by all people, of all countries, and thro' all ages. Even the imitations thro' artificial media, such as the works of the poets, on account of the beauty and perfection of the language in which they wrote, were likely to spread over the earth, and to last as long as sun and moon endured. What a mighty encouragement was this to all such writers as were actuated by a principle of fame, and extended their views to future generations? They also whose chief end was the enjoyment of present fame and honours, had the noblest opportunities of being gratified

tified to the utmost extent of their wishes. This matter has been fully displayed by the abbé Du Bos in the following passage.

‘ The opportunities of receiving the ap-  
 ‘ plauses and favours of great assemblies  
 ‘ were very frequent in Greece. As we  
 ‘ have congresses in our times, where the  
 ‘ deputies of princes and states meet in or-  
 ‘ der to terminate wars, and regulate the  
 ‘ fates of provinces, and the limits of  
 ‘ kingdoms; in like manner, there were  
 ‘ assemblies formerly from time to time,  
 ‘ where the most illustrious personages of  
 ‘ Greece rendezvoused, in order to decide  
 ‘ the merit of the most eminent painter,  
 ‘ the most moving poet, and the best  
 ‘ wrestler. This was the real motive  
 ‘ which induced such multitudes of peo-  
 ‘ ple to flock to those publick games that  
 ‘ were celebrated in different cities. The  
 ‘ publick porticos where the poets went  
 ‘ to recite their verses, or painters to ex-  
 ‘ pose their pictures, were places where  
 ‘ the better sort of company used gene-  
 ‘ rally to meet. In fine, “ the works of  
 ‘ great masters, as Pliny observes, were  
 ‘ not considered at the time here men-  
 ‘ tioned,



tioned, as common moveables destined  
to imbellish a private person's apartment; no, they were looked upon as the jewels of the state, and as a publick treasure, the enjoyment whereof was due to all the inhabitants." The ardour which painters and poets had in those times to improve their talents, was not inferior to the eagerness which we observe in the people of our days to heap up money, and to attain to great employments in the state.'

How must the hearts of artists in those times have exulted, and how must their ears have been ravished with the general and united applauses, of the most august assemblies \* of the world? And how must this have spurred them on to the utmost stretch of their faculties, in comparison of the present cold approbation given in private, and the slow growth of reputation from the suffrages of individuals?

\* We may easily judge what an incitement this must have been to men of genius, when we have it on record, that the great Themistocles, upon being received at the Olympick festival with the general shouts and applauses of the assembly, said, ' This was the happiest day he had ever known, and that he then reaped the full reward of all his labours.'

Especially when it is considered that this did not end merely in fame, but the artists who bore away the prizes, were immediately raised, perhaps from meanness and obscurity, into great personages; so as to be considered of an equal rank with those who were entrusted with the highest offices. And it was often known that men of the noblest birth, and greatest riches in Greece, did not think it a dishonour to marry their daughters to such eminent poets, painters, and musicians, as had distinguished themselves in an extraordinary manner on these occasions. If the chief object of some was profit, it is evident from the great price which their works bore, and the large fortunes raised by several artists, how amply they might be gratified in this point also.

But the highest incentive of all to the exertion of true genius, was the moral certainty of rewards being distributed with skill and impartiality. The multitude of judges effectually prevented corruption; and their skill arose partly from a general good taste diffused thro' the whole body of the people; and partly from the great oppor-

opportunities, which all who were inclined to it had, of forming and fixing their taste upon the best models, by means of the most excellent works of all kinds being the property of the publick, and consequently accessible at all times, and by all persons. On which accounts it is more than probable, that a common illiterate Athenian might be a more competent judge of perfection in all the liberal arts, than the nicest and most pains-taking of our connoisseurs. They had constant opportunities of comparing the copies with their true archetypes, with nature herself. They had daily before their eyes the great originals of grace and expression, in the looks, gesture, and tones of their orators; and therefore could not fail of judging whether the copies were right. A man in those days might say, that the turn of countenance, the attitude and action of a figure represented in a history piece, were just and expressive, because he had seen such used by a Pericles, a Demosthenes, or a Demades, upon a similar occasion, and in the representation of a like passion or affection. He might pass judgement  
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likewise with equal certainty in regard to tones, sounds and cadences in musical or poetical expression. Whereas a modern critick has no archetype to refer to but the works of the most celebrated masters. He can only say that such a picture is in the manner of a Raphael or a Rubens; or such a poem, and such a piece of musick, is in the style of this poet, and that composer. The utmost therefore that he can arrive at, is to form only a comparative judgement: and even in that respect, in many cases, an unlettered Athenian had, without study or application, great advantages over him, by means of the constant opportunities which he had of seeing all the greatest works of the greatest masters publicly exposed to view; which must imperceptibly infuse into him a good comparative taste, tho' he should be totally ignorant of all rules, and principles. Whereas a modern virtuoso must travel over all Europe, be at great pains and expence to get access to the cabinets of the curious, and even then will hardly be allowed time enough to examine them sufficiently, so as to form an accurate

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judgement of the several works. And this was the true source of that general good taste amongst the antients, which we find so greatly celebrated. Hence it was that the Athenians obtained that remarkable character from Cicero ; ‘ The judgement  
‘ of the Athenians was so true and just,  
‘ that they could not listen to any thing  
‘ but what was pure and elegant.’

It must be allowed that an artist could no where find such due encouragement, or have such moral certainty of meeting with rewards proportioned to his merit, as from the suffrages of a free people, amongst whom a general good taste prevailed. Next to that, tho’ far short indeed, is the countenance and favour of an absolute prince, when he happens to be a man of skill and integrity, or is served by ministers possessed of those qualities. But in a country where neither the prince is absolute, nor the people in general have a good taste, it is hardly possible that the arts should ever flourish. In the English constitution, which like the antient republicks has liberty for it’s object, and wherein each claims a right of judging  
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for himself in all matters whatever, it is extremely necessary that the people should have proper opportunities of having their judgements rightly informed. For in proportion as a bad taste should prevail amongst them, in proportion will the works of such artists as flatter that vicious taste be encouraged; and every encouragement given to the false, becomes a discouragement to the true genius. Nothing therefore can possibly raise the arts to any pitch of perfection amongst us, but a general good taste in the people; and nothing can possibly create and diffuse this general good taste, but the study and practice of oratory.

## C H A P. IX.

*Objection to the above hypothesis, drawn from the works of the modern artists; and answer to the objection.*

**T**O all that I have said in support of my hypothesis, I know it will at once be objected, that the revival of the arts in Europe, and their most flourishing

state, were brought about without any of the aids of oratory, which I have pretended to be so necessary to their perfection. The boasted ages of Leo X. and Lewis XIV. with all the great masters which they produced, will immediately be quoted upon me. I am much deceived if a thorough discussion of this point, would not serve to illustrate and establish my opinion, more clearly and firmly, than any thing else. But as this would lead me into too wide a field for the bounds of this work, and as I intend on another occasion to enter into a more minute disquisition of this whole matter, I shall content myself at present with touching only upon some of the principal points, in order to invalidate, in some measure, the objections which may be raised upon this head.

In the first place, nothing can be more clearly proved, than that the great artists during those periods, borrowed their chief excellencies from the works of the antients, and consequently that they were at best but imitators, and copyists.

Secondly, that the supposed perfection of their works, has not been settled by  
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any absolute standard, but by comparison only.

Lastly, that the few originals which have been produced since the revival of the arts, have been indebted for their chief value to oratory.

In speaking to these several points, I would have it remembered, that I do not at all take into my account, such works as depend merely upon the skill, and knowledge of the masters in their several arts, but only such as have reference to their great end, of representing human nature in it's most exalted, and dignified state.

It was in the age of Julius II. and Leo X. that the arts arose out of the tombs in which they had so long been buried; and, during that period, some of them arrived at a degree of perfection, which all the endeavours of man have not since been able to keep up. But they were far from going hand in hand together, and keeping an even pace, as they were always observed to do in Greece and Rome, soon after their births; painting and statuary left their sisters far behind, and



reached the goal where poetry and musick had <sup>started.</sup> Let us see how this diversity of the fate and progress of the modern arts, from those of the antients, can be reconciled to reason : for in Greece and Rome poetry and musick were the elder, and started first ; tho' they were quickly followed and overtaken in the race by their younger sisters : and indeed in the natural order of things this must have been the case. Nor do I know upon what principle this difference can be accounted for, but that of plagiarism, and a supposition that the modern artists borrowed their chief beauties from the works of the antients ; especially when we find that the solution of this difficulty will follow in the most natural manner from that principle.

It is well known that it was owing to the great pains and assiduity of Julius II. and Leo X. in searching after those concealed treasures, that almost all the precious remains of antiquity, both of painting and statuary, which were buried under the ruins of Rome, were brought to light. These were collected and preserved

served with the utmost care by those two passionate lovers of the arts. Their great liberalities encouraged all persons of genius to apply themselves closely to the study of them : and, with such advantages as they possessed, of having so great a variety of the most perfect models before their eyes, it is no wonder that the progress of the first artists was so rapid, and that their works far excelled all those of their successors. The painters particularly had patterns in these antient pictures, of grace and expression, which were no longer to be met with in nature ; an advantage which none of their successors could have, as those pieces in a few years, after having been exposed to the external air, mouldered away, and at last totally disappeared. The \* first painters had therefore the most perfect models in those great originals, which were immediate transcripts from nature ; whilst such as were bred up under them had only copies to study in the works of their masters, and conse-

† It need scarce be mentioned also what benefit these first painters must have received, from the large collection of statues then to be seen together at Rome.

quently were one degree farther removed, and could only see nature, as it were, in a second reflection. Those who were bred up under them again were still more remote, 'till at last the object entirely disappeared. And this perhaps may be found to be the true reason why history-painting has from that time to this been in a constant state of declension, so that scarce the shadow of it now appears upon earth. In statuary also the first artists had the advantage of finding a prodigious number of the great works of antiquity collected together in one place; whilst thro' the negligence or want of taste in the succeeding popes, those immense treasures have been scattered over the world, and must be searched for in the collections of many private persons, as well as kings and princes, thro' the several countries of Europe. But as statues and pieces of sculpture are not made of such perishable materials as pictures, and as these models are still in being, artists of genius may still form their taste upon them by pains and travelling; and therefore we have good statuaries, and sculptors

tors yet to be found in several countries in Europe, according to the encouragement given to their several abilities; nor have we any reason to suppose that there will be any great deficiency of artists in this way, whilst such patterns for their imitation remain, and whilst suitable rewards attend their labours. Nothing can serve more strongly to confirm this point than the success of the academy of Lewis XIV. founded at Rome by that monarch, at an immense expence, in order to give young persons of genius the utmost opportunities of improving themselves in those arts. But fifty years care and cost scarce produced one painter of note; whereas a large number of sculptors was formed there, whose works far excelled all those of their contemporaries. As the great assistance, which the masters derived from the remains of the antients, in those two arts, was a sufficient cause of the rapidity of their progress; so the slow advances made in musick, and poetry, can be fully accounted for upon the same principle. It is well known that the antient musick was entirely lost, so that  
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the men of genius for that art, having no such lights to guide them, as the others had, were a long time groping their way in the dark; and when they emerged into light, found themselves at a vast distance behind their brethren of the other professions. For this reason also, having none of the great masters of antiquity to be their guides, they steered towards a wrong object, and made pleasure their end, which by the antients was only used as the means. The poets indeed were in a different situation: they, like the painters and statuaries, had the noblest works of Greece and Rome to serve them as patterns; but their instruments were too poor to give a just copy of the grace, and beauty to be found in those originals. The languages of Europe were as yet in a rude state †. The Italian, which was the least corrupted of all those derived from the antient Roman, was the first which gave any dawnings of

† That this was the true cause of the slow progress of poetry, and not any dearth of genius, may appear from the several excellent compositions in Latin, inferior to none but those of the Augustan age, which at that time were produced by Sanizarius, Vida, &c.

elegance in modern poetry ; and the French, soon after, with immense pains and industry, polished their language as far as the nature of it would admit, so as to exhibit some faint representation of the beauties to be found in the works of the antient poets. But it is easy to be seen in the writings of both countries, that their chief merit consisted in an imitation of the antients. The Italians took the most daring flights, and boldly soared into the regions of epick poetry ; but, however lofty to a modern eye their excursions might appear, they fell far short of their great masters : and it was clear that they mounted only on borrowed wings, by the sudden precipitate falls, and irregularities of motion, whenever they trusted to their native vigour. The French, more conscious of their weakness, and knowing that their wings were only fastened with wax, dreaded the fate of Icarus if they approached too near the sun, and therefore never attempted any flights beyond the middle regions of tragick poetry. There too they followed the antients at a distance, and would venture into no  
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track unmarked by them. As it is on their tragedies which the French value themselves most, it is worth observing, that their chief merit seems to arise from a cold observation of the rules of the antients in the structure of those pieces; whilst the chief point, a just representation of the personages of the drama, has been neglected. The great heroes of Greece and Rome, are all metamorphosed into Frenchmen; and Alexander, Cæsar, and Scipio, are become Monsieurs of Paris. Upon the whole, if all that was borrowed from the antients by the Italian and French poets were to be restored, there would scarce any thing great or noble remain; and perhaps the only truly original thing they could boast of would be their rhyme; the full honour of which the antients would hardly envy them.

It is indeed so evident, from the works themselves, that almost all the valuable modern compositions are but copies of the remains of antiquity, that the point need hardly be farther insisted on. The plagiarism of statuaries, sculptors, and poets, is the most visible; as the originals  
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are in being, from which the artists have borrowed, and by a view of which the theft may be discovered. We can not indeed know how much the first painter's borrowed from the pictures which have since been lost; but it is more than probable that they were at least as much indebted to them, as the other artists have been to what have remained. Nor can we doubt from what stores their imaginations were chiefly supplied, when we consider how very improperly, on many occasions, they have introduced ideas which could alone be borrowed from antient works, and were only suitable to their subjects. The abbé Du Bos has observed, ' That  
 ' Michael Angelo was universally blamed,  
 ' for having mixed the fictions of heathen  
 ' poetry with the revealed articles of the  
 ' last judgement, in the representation he  
 ' has drawn thereof, on the bottom wall  
 ' of the chapel of Sixtus IV.' He also takes notice, that Rubens in one of his pieces has drawn our Saviour in the attitude of a fabulous Jove, with a thunderbolt in his hand, ready to dart it against the world. And in another place, treat-  
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ing of the same subject, he has the following passage : ‘ The picture in the gallery of Luxemburg, representing the arrival of Mary of Medicis at Versailles, is an historical composition. The painter intended therefore to represent the event agreeably to truth. The queen lands from on board the Tuscan galleys. The lords and ladies, that accompany, or receive her, are easy to be distinguished. But the Nereids and Tritons, whom Rubens has represented sounding their shells in the harbour, to express the joy with which this maritime town received the new queen, make, to my fancy at least, a very preposterous appearance. As I am sensible that none of these marine deities assisted at the ceremony, this fiction destroys part of the effect, which the imitation would have produced in my mind. Rubens ought here, methinks, to have imbellished his harbour with ornaments more reconcileable to probability. Things that are invented, in order to render a subject more agreeable, should always be consistent with it’s existence.’ His observation is certainly

just; and yet do we not see the same method practised in our poetry? The heathen divinities are still the gods of the Christian poets; and Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva, Cupid, and Venus, are daily introduced even upon modern subjects, tho' at the expence of verisimilitude, which ought to be the chief object in all the imitative arts. But this, amongst many others, is a clear proof from what storehouse the moderns have borrowed their ideas. This is still more evident in statuary, wherein the artists have not only copied the attitude and expression of the antiques, but adorned their modern figures with the very dress and ornaments of the Greeks and Romans.

When therefore we reflect upon the progress of these four arts since their revival; that history-painting made it's quickest marches, and arrived at a higher point of perfection, than has been since known, during the time that the artists had an opportunity of studying the antient pictures; and, since those perished, it has declined, and is now almost vanished: that statuary reached it's summit whilst  
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the artists had the best opportunity of examining the largest collection of antiques; and that the most admired works are still produced by those who have the best means of viewing those models: that poetry in the several nations of Europe has made advances towards excellence, in proportion as the Greek and Roman authors were more or less generally studied amongst them; and that the compositions in this way are more or less valued in proportion as they resemble those standards: that musick, which had no patterns from antiquity to imitate, has never yet attained it's end, and is only a mere sensual delight, without contributing to the benefit of mankind: may we not boldly conclude, That  
' the great modern artists have borrowed  
' their chief excellencies from the works  
' of the antients, and consequently that  
' they are at best but imitators and copyists ?'

## C H A P. X.

*That the supposed perfection of modern works, has not been settled by any absolute standard, but by comparison only.*

**I**T is evident enough that the works of the greatest modern artists in poetry, and statuary, have but a comparative value, and that there is a twofold judgement passed upon them. When compared with those of the antients, they fall far short of the perfection to be found in them; and appear, relatively, mean in the eyes of all persons of true taste: but, when compared with the performances of their contemporaries, or such as have succeeded them, the works of the most eminent acquire a superiority above the rest, as much as they themselves are found inferior to those of antiquity. Nor is there any reason to believe, but that the case would be exactly similar with respect to painting, and musick, if the several compositions of the great antient masters in those arts, had been preserved and handed down to us in



the same manner, as in the others. From the many wonderful accounts transmitted to us, by persons of undoubted authority, of the amazing effects produced by the musical compositions of the antients, we can not believe but that they were of a kind far superior to ours: and, tho' their paintings are lost to us, yet some of them retain still a kind of being in the elegant descriptions given of them by several authors, so as to enable us to form a tolerable notion of their merit. Whoever reads Pliny's account of a picture drawn by Aristides, representing a woman stabbed with a poniard, having a sucking child at her breast; the praises which Ausonius bestows upon the Medea of Timomachus: what Pliny and Quintilian both have said upon the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Timanthes; the excellent description which Lucian gives of a grand piece representing the marriage of Alexander and Roxana; as also the family of a Centaur drawn by Zeuxis, with many others to the same effect; can not but conclude that the painters of antiquity were masters of the noblest and most accurate expression, as well as  
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of the finest poetick and picturesque composition. And indeed, when we find that all the antients, who have written upon those subjects, are agreed in allowing that painting and musick were in as high a degree of perfection as poetry and sculpture; we can not refuse our belief to the testimony of such exquisite judges.

Here it must be observed therefore, that tho' the compositions in modern painting and musick, be generally thought to have a more absolute degree of perfection than those of poetry and sculpture; yet, in fact, they have only a comparative value. The whole difference lies in this; that as some of the noblest works of antiquity in the latter arts are still remaining, the compositions of the moderns suffer much when compared with them; but, as all the traces of the former are lost, the most eminent masters of latter times can be only compared with such as are inferior to themselves; and consequently, by such a comparison, their works must always appear in the most advantageous light. Nay, to modern judges, they must of course become the standards of perfection. But

were the masterly drawings of the anti-ent painters still in being, it is more than probable, that the historical pieces of our most celebrated artists, would be thrown at as great a distance by a comparison with them, and sink as much in their value, as the works of our poets and statuaries have done. And could we hear the antient musick performed in it's utmost perfection, our admiration of the modern would perhaps be changed into contempt, and the most excellent of our composers be considered only as agreeable triflers.

From this view it is evident, that however the reputation of the modern artists in painting and musick may have been raised by the loss of the works of the antients, yet the arts themselves must have suffered amazingly; and all true critical knowlege, with respect to those, must have been proportionably less. For there can be no doubt, but that the curious enquirers into poetry and statuary, have much stronger, and more certain lights, to guide their judgements, in ascertaining the real value of any production in either of those arts, by means of the twofold  
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comparifon ; whereas they who have a tafte for mufick and painting can only judge by comparifon of the works of one modern with thofe of another.

## C H A P. XI.

*That the few originals, which have been produced fince the revival of the arts, have been indebted for their chief value to oratory.*

I HAVE already taken notice, that I fpeak all along only of fuch compofitions in the imitative arts, as are of the more exalted and heroick kind. Of thefe we fhall perhaps find very few amongft the moderns which can be juftly allowed to be originals. All that is called great and noble in ftatuary, has been apparently borrowed from the antients ; as alfo in hiftory-painting. Nor has the fublimer kind of poetry been lefs indebted to them. Every thing in our mufick indeed, muft be allowed to be original, as it was of our own invention, and could owe nothing to antiquity ; fince that art had been



wholly lost. But this, according to the modern practice, must be looked upon rather as a mathematical science, ornamented by fancy, than one of the imitative arts. Throughout all the nations of Europe, Italy and England alone can have the honour of boasting that they have produced some noble originals: Italy in painting, and England in poetry. The pictures of devotion, which chiefly employed the masters of the Italian school, might probably vie with the greatest productions of old, were they still subsisting, in point of force of expression, sublimity, and truth; because the masters had an opportunity of taking these warm from life, in an infinite number of subjects daily to be seen in their chapels, in those days when piety and enthusiasm were at their greatest height. As praying with devotion, and a hearty zeal, must be allowed to be one of the most exalted species of oratory, and as nothing can be more strongly characterised by the human features and gesture; the modern artists must have had as good subjects, and as frequent opportunities of drawing from the life, in this

respect, as the antients had in others: so that, supposing an equality of genius and execution, there is good reason to believe, that the devotional pictures of the Italian painters may every way be equally excellent with the historical pieces of antiquity. This opinion will appear the more probable, when we consider, that tho' the historical pieces of the most eminent Italian painters have raised great admiration, when compared with those of others; yet they are far from being allowed to be the most excellent of their own works. It has been universally agreed, that the paintings on religious subjects of Angelo, Raphael, Titian, &c. are their most finished pieces, and far superior to their other performances. Let it be remembered also, that during the age of Leo X. and for some time afterwards, zeal for religion was carried to a much higher pitch, on account of the struggles occasioned by the several secessions from the church of Rome, begun and carried on in those days, than it probably ever was either before or since. This must not only have made a greater number of

devotees, and afforded more frequent examples of a warm expression, but must likewise have roused the Italian \* preachers, always allowed to be the most animated of any in Europe, to the utmost exertion of their faculties; and consequently have given advantages to the painters of those days, in all subjects of this nature, over all artists of other countries, as well as their successors in their own.

England has produced two poets in the sublimer kinds of writing, the epick and tragick, who must be allowed to be truly originals. But it would be no difficult matter to prove, that they were indebted for the greatest part of their excellence, and their undoubted superiority over all the moderns of all nations, to their skill in oratory. Whoever is conversant in the writings of Milton, must be convinced that he made that art his peculiar study. No other poet has shewn so profound a knowlege of the power of sounds, or the

\* To this cause might probably be owing, the forcible expression so much admired in one of the cartoons, where St. Paul is represented in the action of preaching to the Athenians.

force of expression from a proper arrangement of words. No writer of antiquity has shewn more perfect skill in the whole art of eloquence, than he has displayed in the speeches of Satan and his fallen crew. Whoever examines carefully his account of the proceedings at the Pandæmonium in his second book, will find, that in the speeches of Satan himself, of Moloc, Be-lial, Mammon, and Beelzebub, he seems to have taken in almost the whole compass of oratory; and that there is scarce a species of it, of which he has not given a noble and complete specimen. Nor could the secretary of Cromwell have wanted subjects to draw after the life from that great master of persuasion and his associates; by whom that art was as much cultivated, and to whom it was as useful in carrying their points, as the force of arms, and military skill.

Shakespear, whose towering genius, and uncommon reach of understanding, had endued him with an intuitive quickness in his searches into human nature, had acquired from the very profession in which he was engaged, an habitual and practical know-



knowledge of the oratorical art, far superior to all theory. To be convinced of his admirable skill in this respect, we need only look over his short piece of advice to the player in his Hamlet; wherein we can not but wonder how it was possible, that so just and comprehensive a system of rules both for action, and speaking, could have been comprized in so narrow a compass. It might be easily shewn, that the great success of his pieces at this day, and the effects which they produce in the representation, have been chiefly owing to his skill in the art of speaking. It was that which enabled him to form a true dramattick style, that happy arrangement and disposition of his words, so perfectly adapted to his subjects, which throw such a lustre on his sentiments, and are so admirably suited to the mouth of the speaker. These are the beauties which particularly distinguish his plays, in the representation at least, and sufficiently make amends for all the irregularities of his drama. Whilst the works of most of our other writers, who have great advantages over him in other respects, thro'

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want of skill in this essential art, are heard with languor, or disgust. And this will be found to be the best reason why many plays still give delight in the closet, which are insupportable on the stage. The same verses may give pleasure to the eye, which are tedious to the ear; the style which is not easy to the speaker, becomes disagreeable to the hearer; and no man can write well for the speaker, who can not speak well himself.

To obviate all the objections which may be raised against the hypothesis which I have laid down, and to invalidate the arguments of the many writers on this subject, would far exceed the compass and design of this work. I have contented myself at present with endeavouring to make this opinion appear not improbable, and with cursorily taking notice of such obvious objections as were most likely to occur at first view. I shall therefore leave the fuller proof to a future opportunity, and make no doubt but that the closer the examination is, the more will the opinion be justified. I shall conclude my arguments upon this head,

with one which to me, at least, appears an unanswerable proof that the imitative arts borrowed their aids from oratory, not oratory from the imitative arts : that is, supposing that the masters in the imitative arts copied from the orators and their auditories, the various expressions of passion, &c. it is clear that they immediately took them from life, from nature ; whereas, on a supposition that the orators borrowed their skill from the composition in the imitative arts, it is clear that they did not copy from nature, but from artificial works ; and consequently could not have arrived at so perfect an imitation in their way, as the other masters ; a point contradicted by fact, and the concurrent testimony of their contemporaries.

But whether the hypothesis be proved to be right, or not, it is at least to be wished that it were so ; and more particularly by the people of Great Britain than any other nation upon earth. Because from the very nature of their constitution, and their happiness in being possessed of so fine a language, they are now the only people under the sun capable of carrying the oratorical

torial art to as high a degree of perfection as the Greeks and Romans; and consequently the only people who have it in their power to bring the imitative arts to maturity. This, if believed or known, would be no little incitement to industry, and no small inducement to apply with the utmost assiduity to the study of eloquence; an art of itself so desirable, and attended with such immediate benefit to the possessors, but which would acquire a new value, and become a national concern, if it were known to be productive of such noble consequences, by its influence on the other arts. Whereas, on a contrary supposition, should the opinions hitherto delivered upon this subject be established, that genius is a casual production arising from some lucky circumstances of air and climate, which have an influence upon the animal spirits, and from a happy conformation of the organs of the brain, &c; it is evident that all industry must be discouraged, as labour must prove ineffectual in all countries not possessed of such a happy climate, and in all persons who may not suppose themselves formed with that  
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lucky structure of the organs. However advocates for such opinions may shew their own ingenuity, by the invention of many specious arguments to support them, I should be glad to know what benefit mankind is to reap from their labours? or what reward they should expect, even if they were capable of demonstrating principles, which indeed, in their own nature, can be founded upon nothing but conjecture; and which, if believed, might be productive of great mischief, and could not possibly do any good? For upon a proof of their system, whole nations, as well as individuals, must lay aside all attempts in the liberal arts, from an utter despair of meeting with success.

## CHAPTER. XII.

*Good consequences to Great Britain, should the above opinions be found to be true.*

**O**N a supposition that my hypothesis is well founded, and that the perfection of eloquence would necessarily bring on the perfection of the liberal arts,  
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I can not help here indulging myself in a view of the many glorious advantages which would result from it to Great Britain. Let us only suppose that the arts were in as high perfection here as at Athens, or Rome, (and I shall hereafter shew from certain discoveries and advantages, which time has given us over the antients, that they may be carried to a much higher pitch) what must necessarily be the consequence to this country.

Had we amongst us such excellent painters and sculptors as those of old, their works would soon call upon the attention of the publick to have suitable edifices raised to be the repositories of these treasures. Upon proper encouragement there would not be wanting men of true genius and capacity in architecture, who applying themselves wholly to the study of that art, might rival those great antients, the ruins of whose works excite in us such admiration. \* A proposal for building a parliament-house, courts of justice, royal palace, and other publick edifices, suitable to the dignity of the nation, would

\* Bp. of Cloyne.

not then be laughed at as a vain affair ; but these would be considered as works of necessity, and of the utmost benefit to the country. If all the publick buildings as well as private palaces (for such may several houses of our nobility be termed) had been raised in the true style of architecture ; and if these were every where adorned with pieces of painting and sculpture, exceeding those of all other countries ; would not London be the grand emporium of arts, as she already is of commerce ? Would not persons flock hither from all parts of the world to see and admire these works ? Does not her very situation, and the ease with which her shores are accessible to people from all corners of the earth, give England a natural right in this respect over all other countries in the World ? And has not France ravished this from her merely by art and industry ? Can it be doubted, considering our great advantages in point of natural beauties, if we excelled the French also in those of the artificial kind, but that London would be more resorted to by travellers from all parts of the earth than Paris ? Nay, should we not draw  
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over the French themselves in as great abundance as the English now travel into France? Would not this be the surest means of increasing the wealth and power of England? Her wealth, from the money brought in by such a concourse of foreigners, and from the disposal of the most valuable of her commodities, produced by the ingenuity of her artists (an inexhaustible fund) over the whole earth: her power, from the great figure she must make, and the high estimation in which she must be held by all other nations; a point of more real consequence than extent of territory or number of forces; which has been sufficiently exemplified in the little commonwealth of Athens.

All the commerce which Great Britain carries on in it's several branches, does not contribute in any degree to her advantage, so much as a single traffick would do in such commodities, as are necessarily produced by a proper cultivation of the liberal arts. Nor could any thing so effectually promote her wealth, her power, her glory, and let me add, her safety. To be convinced of this, we need only take a view of the

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causes of the present splendor of France. Is she not indebted for her flourishing state chiefly to her attention to the arts? By giving due encouragement to painting and sculpture, she has produced many masters, at least of comparative excellence, in the arts of designing, colouring, engraving, chasing, &c. And how greatly by this means has she enhanced the price of her manufactures, in silks, laces, ornamental plate, all sorts of toys and fashions? That it is merely owing to a superiority in point of fashion, and design, that the French commodities are so much sought after, is evident from this circumstance, that the English artisans are universally allowed to exceed them in point of goodness of workmanship; and had they the advantage in other respects also, what infinite sums might be saved to this nation, that are now carried into France to enrich our enemies? and what large treasures might be brought into this island from the other countries of the world, and even from France herself, to purchase such commodities as should be confessedly superior to theirs? Would not this be the true way to bring

bring down the power of France, by cutting off the sources of her wealth? Would not this be the means of lessening the admiration of her neighbours, and of raising the glory of Britain upon her ruins? And would not the weakness of France be the safety of England? Let us therefore suppose that architecture, sculpture, with the several arts dependent on it, painting, poetry, and musick, were in as high a degree of perfection here as at Athens, and consequently so far superior with regard to their state in France that there could be no sort of competition; would not England in this case be the country resorted to by the travellers of the whole world? Would not our language be learned, and our noble authors studied by the people of all nations? Would not the perfect knowledge which must then be spread of our noble constitution, of our religion, of the glorious writings of our philosophers, and divines, strike them with awe and veneration, and make them acknowledge an undoubted superiority in us over all other countries? Would not London in this case become the capital not of England, but of

the world; and England be considered as a queen among the nations? On the contrary, what would be the state of France in this case? Would she not sink proportionably low as England should be raised? Should ours come to be studied and universally known, the poverty of their language would, upon comparison, bring it into contempt, and of course into neglect. They would no longer have such crowds of foreigners resorting to their capital, whose residence amongst them contributes so largely to their wealth. They would no longer give the laws of fashion to Europe, but receive them from us. Their fantastical pieces of workmanship, calculated to captivate the ignorant and capricious, would no longer stand the test, when compared with such as were superior in point of true taste founded upon good sense. Thus that kingdom would be reduced to the degree of weakness, which is the necessary consequence of too large extent of territory without a sufficient number of inhabitants. The bulk of the people would be poor and wretched thro' want of industry, which would of course flag with

with commerce; and the spirits of the better sort would decay with the glory of their country: since nothing has contributed so much to excite in them their high notions of honour, as the fancied greatness of their *Monarque*, and the apparent superiority which their country has gained, by great art, in many points, over their neighbours. But should the spells and charms by which she has fascinated all the nations round her, once be broken; should the superior genius of Britain prevail, and shine forth in all its splendor; the boasted glory of France would vanish like a mist before the morning sun. When the eyes of Europe should be opened, and the true light shine before them, they would wonder how they could have been so long imposed upon by false appearances, and tinsel glistening. Thus sunk in the estimation of their neighbours, the French would soon sink in their own; and in a short time, far from thinking of attacking others, they would scarce be able to defend themselves.

If the perfection of the liberal arts would be the means of raising Great Britain, in



point of glory, and power, above all her neighbours; neither would it contribute less to her domestick order, health, and happiness. These depend upon the morality of a nation; and it can be demonstrated, that the morality of a people so circumstanced as we are, and under such a constitution, must in a great measure depend upon a proper cultivation of the arts. This I shall attempt to do in the following manner. From the nature of our situation, which has brought on an extensive commerce, much wealth is necessarily poured in upon us. This, from the nature of our constitution, is more equally diffused thro' the inhabitants, and becomes more certainly their property than under any other form of government. A superfluity of wealth of course increases a desire of pleasure (so natural to man) as it furnishes those who are possessed of it with the means of gratifying that desire. Now it may be confidently asserted, that no nation upon earth, in proportion to the number of it's inhabitants, contains so many individuals possessed of more wealth than is requisite to supply the necessities  
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of life, as England : consequently, that there is no nation where a desire of pleasure is likely to be so epidemick. Upon the right direction of this desire therefore will the morality and happiness of the people in a great measure depend.

Pleasures are of three kinds ; intellectual, which arise from the culture of the understanding ; sensitive, from the gratification of the appetites, and passions ; and reflective, from the powers of the imagination. To obtain the first, requires close study, labour, and application ; they are likely therefore only to be pursued by such as have their fortunes to make : the second are common to all men, as well as to brutes : and the last seem to be particularly calculated for those, whose independent fortunes render it not necessary to take the pains requisite to arrive at the highest degree of intellectual pleasure ; and yet whose reason may be sufficiently improved not to give themselves wholly up to sensual gratifications.

The highest pleasures of imagination arise from the imitative arts. It is of the

utmost consequence therefore to an opulent nation, that they should be in a proper degree of perfection. These pleasures, being of a middle kind between the rational and sensitive, and partaking of both, are productive of good or bad consequences, according as they incline most to one or the other.

When the rational is predominant, they shorten the road to wisdom, and exhibit virtue in the most amiable light; they enlarge the understanding, and better the heart. But, when the sensitive prevails, they become bawds to the passions, and only serve to extend the empire of vice and ignorance.

The truth of this will sufficiently appear, upon considering the different effects produced by the arts, according as they are employed in the cause of virtue, or of vice. Nothing can convey instruction with delight, ennoble the mind, or enlarge the heart so much, as good poems, plays, pieces of oratory, painting and sculpture, representing great and glorious actions and persons. Nothing can so effectually debauch the mind and corrupt the

the heart, as the prostitution of these arts to lewd and sensual purposes.

The morality of a nation depends therefore more upon the right direction of the imitative arts than is imagined. The example of the nobility, gentry, and persons of independent fortunes, is ever followed by the lower class of people: and, when that leads to sensuality, the whole nation will of course be corrupt. Nor can I see, as matters are circumstanced, but that the rich must, by a fatal necessity, be plunged into vice. Wealth of course makes pleasure their chief object. That of the rational kind, is too laborious, for persons whose minds and bodies have been rendered effeminate and indolent, from the easiness of their circumstances. Whilst they are impelled to the sensual by passions from within, and are allured by excitements from without, they naturally fall into gratifications of this kind, from the ease with which they are obtained. If, therefore, the pleasures of imagination, which alone could hinder them from being absorbed in those, by filling up their time with delight, instead of being of the  
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same side with virtue, should become confederates with vice; would not all restraints be taken off from their unruly appetites? would they not be plunged into sensuality by double violence? would they not be allured to it by double charms?

If we compare the state of England with any other country, we shall find, from the very nature of our constitution, that the cultivation and proper direction of the pleasures of imagination, are more essential to us than to any other people upon earth. In despotick governments people may be restrained by fear from indulging too much in sensual pleasures \*, to the prejudice of society and government. In republicks, rewards, honours, and emulation, may spirit up persons of the highest birth and fortune to laborious studies, and to dedicate themselves chiefly to pleasures of the rational kind †. But in Britain, where the rich need not fear punishments, and where rewards are not the necessary consequences of im-

\* Of this there is a remarkable instance in the abstinence of the Turks from wine.

† The histories of the Greek and Roman republicks abound with instances of this sort.

proved

proved abilities; nothing can possibly hinder persons of independent fortunes from laying themselves out chiefly for the gratification of their sensual appetites, but a true taste for the liberal arts, and a right enjoyment of the pleasures of imagination.

Nothing else can form a sufficient barrier against the devastations of luxury, and the inevitable destruction which is ever its attendant. A learned luxury does not add so much to the ornament, as the strength of a nation. It ennobles the mind, and excites an ardor for great and heroick achievements. It gives a higher relish for liberty and virtue, and teaches men how to set a true value on those inestimable blessings. It is an antidote against the poisonous qualities of excessive wealth, and makes superfluity salutary to a nation. There is no fear that money can be poured too fast into a country, or be productive of any bad effects, where the arts flourish, and a general good taste for them prevails. In such case, the endeavours to merit reward would increase in proportion to the power of reward-

warding; the number of artists, to the number of encouragers; and no fund of wealth, can be more copious or inexhaustible, than the fund of genius. Let us suppose this to be the state of Britain; let us suppose a sufficient number of real artists, and a sufficient quantity of true taste in the people; how gloriously might the superfluity of the rich be employed in rewarding merit, in encouraging genius, and in purchasing their noble productions? How much more delightfully to themselves, as well as beneficially to their country, might their time be employed in the study of these agreeable arts, and in the rational enjoyments which they bestow; than in gaming, drinking, and all the other modish amusements?

It was to the want of pleasures of this kind, that all the great empires of the world chiefly owed their destruction. When conquest introduced wealth, and wealth stimulated a desire of pleasure, the rich had none to chuse but of the sensual kind. Intemperance debased their minds, and enervated their bodies. Thus they fell an easy prey to the first warlike  
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people that attacked them. Their conquerors in their turn, allured by the same delights, were dissolved in voluptuousness, and met with the same fate from some more hardy people. Thus fell the mighty empires of the Assyrians, Persians, Medes, Ægyptians, &c. If it be said that Athens and Rome also fell, tho' the liberal arts were carried in both places to the highest perfection, it can be shewn that their ruin was not owing to the same cause. The stamina of those states were bad, the vitals were unsound; and, far from wondering at their dissolution, we ought only to be surprised how they lasted so long. It can be shewn, that the cultivation of the arts contributed much to prolong their date; but no remedy could have been effectual, when the disease was mortal. With respect to Athens, it is well known that she was indebted for her rise, and the great figure she made in the world, to the arts; but her ambition increased with her flourishing state, and far exceeded her power. The extreme jealousy which the Athenians had of their liberty, by it's excess, degenerated into a vice; and the ostracism



cism introduced by it, often brought them into danger, by depriving the state of it's ablest guardians. It is true that the empire of the sea gave Athens a power, to which she was not at all entiled from the small extent of her territories. The observation made by Montesquieu upon this head, is well worth the attention of every Englishman. The passage is this. ' But  
' this Athenian lordship of the seas, de-  
' serves to be more particularly mentioned.  
' Athens, says Xenophon, rules the sea ;  
' but as the country of Attica is joined to  
' the continent, it is ravaged by enemies,  
' while the Athenians are engaged in  
' distant expeditions. Their leaders suf-  
' fer their lands to be destroyed, and se-  
' cure their wealth by sending it to some  
' island. The populace, who are not  
' possessed of lands, have no uneasiness.  
' But if the Athenians inhabited an island,  
' and besides this, enjoyed the empire of  
' the sea, they would, as long as they were  
' possessed of these advantages, be able to  
' annoy others, and at the same time be  
' out of all danger of being annoyed.'

Montesquieu's observation upon the above

passage from Xenophon is this; 'One would imagine that Xenophon was speaking of England.'

Here we may see that the naval power of Athens must have received continual checks from the nature of her situation; and that her victories at sea might at any time be ballanced by the destruction of her territories, and even her city. In this respect therefore it will at once occur what an amazing advantage Great Britain has over her. But when we consider the small number of her citizens, which seldom amounted to more than twenty thousand, we shall rather have occasion to wonder at the degree of power to which her state was raised, and that she was able so long to maintain it, than at its destruction. The utmost activity in each individual was absolutely necessary to the preservation of so small a body. When therefore the study of philosophy became pretty general amongst them; when the contemplative was preferred to the active life; when persons of the greatest abilities amongst them withdrew from publick affairs to the consideration of their own private happiness; the

the state was of course deprived of the best heads to direct it, and the bravest hearts to defend it. And this alone was sufficient to bring on the ruin of Athens.

If we even add, that the very means which raised them to greatness, if not properly restrained, must produce their destruction; that the too great indulgence to a love \* of the liberal arts must have had as bad effects with respect to the safety of such a small body, as the love of vice in larger states: if we allow that a learned luxury, becoming epidemical amongst a few thousands, might as effectually disqualify them from the activity necessary to the preservation of their country, as that of the sensual kind amongst millions; the argument will not be conclusive against the arts themselves, but against the abuse of them: nor should it be any discouragement to the cultivation

\* The love of the arts must have got to a most vicious height, when the people expended larger sums in the decorations of their theatre than in a long war; and when they would not consent, even tho' reduced to extremity, that any part of the fund raised for the support of their publick diversions should be applied to the exigences of the state, and voted him an enemy to his country who should make such a motion.

of those arts in another country otherwise circumstanced. The state of Athens in this case must as necessarily become a bankrupt, as a man of a private fortune who would endeavour, in these sorts of expences, to emulate a prince. But we may say that the estate of Britain, with respect to that of Athens, is immense; and that she may afford to lay out in superfluities what would have beggared the other. Were a number equal to the whole body of the citizens of Athens employed here wholly in the liberal arts, they would not be missed in the state; and there would still be many millions left, out of which guardians might be chosen for the publick safety, both in point of counsel and valour.

Yet we see, under all their disadvantages, what noble efforts this polished people made for their liberty (efforts never known in those undone by sensual luxury) and how long their fate was deferred by the oratory of one single man.

The destruction of the Roman republick was also owing to a constitutional disease. The establishment of the tribunitial



authority was an incurable wound in the very vitals of this state. This is admirably explained by the all-piercing genius of our Shakespear, where he makes Coriolanus say,

- † ‘ And my soul akes
- ‘ To know, when two authorities are up,
  - ‘ Neither supreme, how soon confusion
  - ‘ May enter ’twixt the gap of both, and
  - ‘ take
  - ‘ The one by the other.’

This was the source of perpetual feuds and contests; and the people at length, grown weary of such an unquiet and turbulent life, were prepared to welcome any change of government. Every one who is acquainted with the story of Sylla must see, that tyranny might have taken place sooner, had it not been for his extraordinary moderation. And it is well known, that, as Demosthenes for some time respited the fate of Athens, so did Cicero, by his eloquence, that of Rome; which otherwise, instead of a Cæsar, might have owned Catiline for a master. But it is well worth observing, that Rome never

† Coriol. act iii. scene 1.

## CHAP. XII. EDUCATION. 483

appeared in such glory, never enjoyed such happiness at home, nor was so much respected abroad, as during the time that the arts flourished in their highest degree of perfection. When they disappeared, sensuality alone took place, produced the same effects at Rome as in other great empires, and brought about her total destruction. She depended on her conquests, and universal dominion, for her preservation; but the empire perished by it's own unwieldiness, and Rome fell by her own strength. Here we may take notice of the advantage which Great Britain has over those two famous nations, from her very situation. As an island, she is free from the dangers to which Athens was always exposed; and as an island also, she is restrained from that fatal desire of extending her conquests, which has ever proved the ruin of all ambitious countries.

Since therefore the arts might be of such advantage to the prosperity of Britain; since we might enjoy all the benefits resulting from them, in as high a degree as the Athenians did, without any danger-

ous consequences to be feared from them ; since they might contribute to our glory as much as they did to that of Rome, whilst they resided there, without fear of their vanishing so soon, as the native excellence of our constitution affords strong hopes of it's preservation ; what cause can be assigned that they have hitherto made so small a progress in this island ? Is there any thing in the soil not congenial to them ? Is there an impossibility of their flourishing here ? This is worth enquiry.

#### CH A P. XIII.

*Whether it is not probable that the arts might arrive at as high a pitch in this country, as at Athens or Rome ?*

**I**T has been before observed, that to the perfection of the imitative arts four things are chiefly necessary ; viz. genius, application, proper subjects, and suitable instruments. Let us see how the people of Great Britain stand with respect to these four articles. And first, as to genius.

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The instances of the force of genius in the natives of this country with regard to the imitative arts, are too many and too apparent to need any enumeration. Wherever they have had living subjects to draw from, they have not failed to produce the strongest resemblance, and the most forcible expression. If they have failed in the more exalted views of human nature, it is because there were no where proper objects in life to be found, from which they might receive the impression. Hogarth has admirably represented such nature as he found. Our writers of comedy have out-done all the rest of the world in the variety as well as exact drawing of the characters from the life. Our tragick authors indeed, one only excepted, for the above reason have fallen very short in theirs. Mr. Garrick must be allowed to be inimitable in the representation of such comick characters as he has an opportunity of observing in the world; nor does he fall short of equal perfection in such parts of tragick characters as can be taken from life. The forcible and natural expression of his madness in Lear



could hardly have been represented in such lively colours, had he not borrowed it from the school of nature, from Bedlam. This reminds me of the excellent figures of the two lunatics, done by Cibber. Nor can it be doubted, from the place where they stand, and the opportunities which he must have had, but that the admirable expression to be seen in those statues was taken immediately from life. This is the more likely when it is considered that none of his other works contributed much to his honour, in which, like the rest of his fraternity, he probably contented himself with copying other masters.

But tho' there never had been any instance of this sort, tho' there never had been any production in the arts worthy of admiration, I should not still hesitate to conclude, that Great Britain has abounded more with genius than any other country in the globe, however it has been obscured for want of encouragement, or buried thro' want of opportunity to display itself: for this unanswerable reason; that the perfection of the imitative arts is more  
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necessary to the well-being of Britain, than to any other nation upon earth; and providence furnishes all countries in the most liberal manner, with whatever is most necessary to their well-being. But we do not want instances; no, by the immortal names of Milton and Shakespear, we do not want instances of the noblest kind! When we consider the history of these men, and the concurrence of wonderful circumstances which produced their admirable writings; there appears to be something miraculous throughout. As to Milton, it is well known that he passed the most vigourous of his years in state affairs, and disagreeable controversies. Had he not outlived Cromwell, we should never have known him as a favourite of the muses. After the restoration, if his life had not been preserved by extraordinary means, when he was particularly marked out for destruction; the *Paradise Lost* had never been written, and that first of poets would never have thrown such a lustre on the English nation. And under what circumstances was this great work performed? Distressed in his affairs, deprived of his sight, advanced in years,

tormented by the most acute disorders, surrounded with perils, and the object of hatred and contempt to the greatest part of his countrymen. Under such circumstances was the noblest poem that ever appeared in any age or country, begun and finished. What but the most vivid genius that ever animated a human breast could have inspired such an undertaking, or supported him in the prosecution of it? But when we consider the poor reward which attended his labours, the cold reception which his work met with in that tasteless age; that it lay for a long time on his bookseller's hands as waste paper; what shall we say to his perseverance under these discouragements, to his writing other pieces inimitable in their kind, and only excelled by his own great work? Can it be accounted for on any other principle than that he was favoured with a larger portion of etherial fire, than ever yet was bestowed on mortal?

The story of Shakespear is well known. That he had but a slender education, and served an apprenticeship, in a country town, to a mechanical trade, in which occupation he might probably have continued

tinued all his days, had not the danger incurred on account of a youthful frolick in deer-stealing forced him to fly to London. There chance and want, not any spur-rings of genius, led him to the stage. At that time it was the custom to act plays in the day-time, and persons of fashion, instead of going in coaches, used to ride to the theatre. The first employment of our Shakespear was to hold some of their horses for hire; which for a time afforded him a livelihood. Being often observed by some of the performers in this low office, and having something promising in his aspect, he was at length introduced behind the scenes in quality of prompter's boy. Such were the beginnings, such was the introduction of that great genius into that field of action, where he afterwards displayed his powers in so astonishing a manner. Here is another glaring instance of the superiority of English genius over that of all other countries. For by the force of that alone, without education, without opportunities of improvement, without the excitements of fame, or considerable profit, when the stage was



was as yet in it's infancy, and the national taste universally bad; has this man outdone, in the most essential points of his art, all the great writers of Greece and Rome, who were amply supplied with all possible means of cultivating their talents to the utmost, who were stimulated to display them in the highest perfection, by the most ample rewards, that ambition, love of fame, or desire of wealth could grasp at.

These two great men seem to have been placed by the hand of Providence upon an eminence, like two large beacons, to illuminate the land; that his goodness might be seen by all, and his ways justified to man: to shew his parental care over his creatures, in supplying them with whatever is needful to their happiness: to give an evident proof of his just distributions, that as Britain stood more in need of genius than any other country in the world, so he had supplied it with a larger share. But, tho' the Almighty may sometimes work wonders, in compassion to our weakness, and to assist our blindness; yet, when our eyes are opened, and  
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proper information received, all is done on his part ; and we are left to ourselves to make a proper use of the grace which he has vouchsafed to us. Tho' two have arisen amongst us who seem to have been inspired, and to have been conducted to their point of perfection by means preternatural ; yet it is from application and encouragement alone that we can hope to see many such. For want of these, who can tell how many Miltons may have been lost in the pursuits of worldly interests and grandeur ; and how many Shakespears may have been hid behind counters ? If we continue in the same inattention to such material points, who can tell how many present, and future geniuses, capable of contributing to the benefit and ornament of this country, in the highest degree, may be wholly absorbed in worldly pursuits ?

Upon the whole it may be concluded with certainty, that it is not for want of genius that Britain has not excelled all other countries in the liberal arts, but something else : what that is let us now en-

enquire. The next point to be considered is application.

Application in one country is as much constitutional, as indolence is in another. The difference of climates is the cause of these different effects. A happy temperature of air produces the one, extremes of heat or cold the other. 'Tis as painful to the people to be without employment in the first, as it is to them to enter upon or continue in action in the last. In the one they set themselves to work, in order to avoid uneasiness; in the other, they must be allured to labour by reward, or driven to it by punishment. Perhaps there never was a people in the world so constitutionally industrious as the English; nor can all history produce so many examples of great works, wherein the mental powers are displayed in the most extraordinary manner; undertaken and carried on with so little assistance or encouragement. Their labours seem to have been the result of an internal active principle, and to have been but little influenced by external causes. If therefore to this constitutional

stitutional activity, there should be added all the aids necessary to quicken their progress, and all due encouragement to cheer and enliven their spirits in their fatiguing pursuits ; can it be a matter of doubt whether the English would exceed all other nations, antient and modern, as much in application as they do in genius ?

Proper subjects come next to be considered. It has been already shewn, that proper subjects for the imitative arts, which are calculated only for the use and delight of man, must be such as can contribute most to his advantage and pleasure : and that therefore views of human nature, in it's most exalted and beautiful state, are the fittest subjects for imitation, as being most likely to answer those ends. To know what that state is, we need only enquire into those points which particularly distinguish the human from the brute creation, and give man the great superiority over all other animals. The most obvious distinction of all, is that of speech, without which reason would in a manner be useless to us. By speech I do not here mean the mere articulation of words, a faculty



culty which some birds have as well as we; but the power of communicating our thoughts to each other in their full force, and impressing them strongly on the minds of the hearers, by means of suitable and concomitant tones, gestures, and looks. It is this sort of speech which dignifies man above all other creatures, and which places him in the most conspicuous point of view. Achievements in war, and deeds of arms, may excite our wonder, and astonish our fancy; but views of this sort are only of human nature deformed, and degraded; as the highest courage, shewn on these occasions, does not exceed that of brute beasts. Reason, and the power of communicating it, are the great characteristicks of man; and it is from the proper exercise of these talents alone, that useful and delightful views of human nature can be taken. A complete orator, when he speaks in publick, presents at once to view, all the perfections both of mind and body with which it hath pleased God to adorn man, and which are never seen together in equal force or beauty in any other person, or upon any other

other occasion. Here then alone is to be found the true pattern for the imitative arts, the only just model for the poet, the musician, the painter, the statuary to copy from. If we therefore are more deficient in subjects, than the artists of Athens and Rome, it must be our own fault; since our talents can not be said to be inferior, and since we have every excitement to the study of oratory which they had, and rather in a stronger degree.

The last point to be considered was that of suitable instruments. In this respect it can not be doubted but that we have amazing advantages over the antients. With regard to musical instruments, from a view of the structure of theirs, it is impossible they could have been so perfect as those of later invention. In painting we are possessed of all the colours which they had, and have many super-added, by our commerce with the East and West-Indies, which must have been unknown to them. All instruments used in sculpture, graving, &c. are with us in the highest degree of perfection: and were the English language properly cultivated,  
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it would be found to be a much more complete instrument for the use of poets than what they were possessed of.

If therefore upon the whole we excel them in genius, application, and instruments; what can there be wanting to make the arts flourish more here than ever they did in Athens or Rome, but proper subjects, and due encouragement? It has been already shewn how proper subjects are to be obtained; and due encouragement, from the very nature of our constitution, can proceed only from a general good taste in the people; which must arise from the same source as the subjects. The quantity of the one will necessarily increase in proportion to the number of the other.

When we consider that the cultivation of the arts is absolutely necessary to the well-being of this country; that the means are proportioned to the necessity; that, as luxury must be a necessary disease here, and likely to rage with more violence than any where else, the grand physician increased the quantity and power of the medicine; that there was an uncommon

mon strength of constitution given to struggle with the disorder, and the benign influence of the purest religion superadded: we can not but conclude, that this nation has been more peculiarly favoured by Providence than any other upon earth. When we consider, that from our very situation we are less liable to be attacked by enemies than any other great people ever were; and by the same means we are also precluded from the folly of ambition in endeavouring to extend our dominions by conquest, which has ever ended in the ruin of the greatest empires; that the intellectual faculties were never displayed in so high a degree as by the natives of this country in their searches into philosophy, and all manner of science; that the people seem to be born with the best natural dispositions, and are above all others remarkably brave, generous, charitable, and humane; why does not Britain at this day, eclipse in all things, all other nations that either do or have existed? why may she not promise duration to her state 'till time shall be no more?



## C H A P. XIV.

*The chief disorders of Britain traced to one source.*

W H Y should we look for any other cause of the decay of religion, but the contempt of the clergy? and the contempt of the clergy is sufficiently accounted for, from their incapacity to discharge the principal duties of their office, through a material defect in education. The decay of morality has in all countries ever followed that of religion; and this must be more particularly the case, where the persons appointed to be it's teachers and guardians are so unequal to the task.

Want of knowlege, and a quantity of false knowlege, far worse than none, are the necessary consequences in a country, of not studying and understanding the language which is most generally read.

The low state of the arts is owing to a false taste; and false taste proceeds from a want

CHAP. XIV. EDUCATION. 499

want of using the proper means, early in life, of procuring a true one.

If our legislators have at any time acted wrong, how could it be otherwise expected, when there is no care taken in their education to qualify them for the discharge of so important an office?

If the bulk of our nobility and gentry give themselves up to luxury, is it any wonder, when their affluence sets them above the more laborious investigations of reason; when they are not supplied with the rational pleasures of imagination; but on the contrary, are debauched by the corrupt state of those, and still more stimulated to gratify sensual appetites?

Is it any wonder that the rest of the nation should follow their example?

The infinite variety of opinions is not at all surprising, nor that there should be as many sects of philosophers in England as ever have appeared in the world; since great pains are taken, in the education of youth, to make them acquainted with all these; and, at the most dange-

rous time of life, when the judgement has least power, they are left to themselves to adopt what opinions they please, and to stick by such as are most agreeable to them. Is it any wonder that their raw and weak understandings, bewildered in such a maze of systems, should make their escape from them into the less perplexing regions of scepticism?

That this island should abound more in suicide than any other country upon earth, will no longer appear strange, when it is considered, that nothing brings on the *tedium vitæ* so much as want of employment: and no education in the world qualifies men less for the active life than ours; though, from the very genius of the people, and the nature of our constitution, that ought to be it's chief end. When persons, born with a restless active disposition, do not find proper employment, or are engaged in such as is not suitable to their genius; life becomes a burthen to them. This is a more rational way to account for the frequency  
of

of that crime, than to attribute it to the peculiar qualities of our air, &c. Why is so fair a plea offered; why are any arguments urged to palliate so atrocious a crime? Why is the climate arraigned, and Providence blasphemed, to excuse self-murder, upon a principle contrary to reason and fact? It is to be supposed that our climate has been always the same, and yet there was a time when that crime was as little known here as in any other country. In the reign of Elizabeth, when all found employment, it was hardly heard of; and the great frequency of it has been but of a very short date, and since many people have had little to do. A gentleman, in a well-known recent instance, gave the true reason why it is grown so common, in a letter which, just before he shot himself, he wrote to his friends, who were then waiting for him at a tavern; wherein he said, that he was grown weary of buckling and unbuckling his shoes every day.

Why is the climate called in upon all occasions, as a general solution for all  
such



such difficulties as are above the capacities of our minute philosophers? Why is it to the changeableness of that, and to liberty, that the variety of manners, dispositions, tempers, and humours in individuals, the infinite number of sects in philosophy, religion, and politicks, are imputed? The climate has not always produced the same effects in this country; nor has liberty done it in others; why may they not all be referred to their true source, education? By that our opinions and notions are formed; and by those our actions are governed.

How is it possible that the British constitution can flourish, when the education of their youth is neither suited to it's end, it's nature, or it's principles?

In Athens and Rome there were two systems of education, which prevailed at two different æras; one in their flourishing, the other in their corrupt state. In the first, oratory and philosophy were united; and the youth were trained up to be not only wise, but active members of society. In the last, philosophy became  
the

the only study ; the active was changed for the contemplative life ; their time was chiefly employed in empty disquisitions, and disputes about trifles ; they, for the most part, became wise only in their own conceit, and were utterly incapacitated from being of any use to the publick. By this latter education chiefly was Athens destroyed ; and this was the system which was adopted at Rome when in her state of slavery and corruption.

Britain had her choice of these two methods. She has chosen the latter. What consequences are to be expected from it ?

But beside her preference of the worst mode of antient education, she has adopted into her system all the worst of the modern. Every thing that is bad in the French, is studiously imitated by us ; every thing that is good in their institution, wholly neglected.

Montesquieu, in speaking of the difference between antient and modern education, says, ‘ Another advantage  
‘ their

‘ their education had over ours ; it was  
‘ never effaced by contrary impressions.  
‘ Epaminondas, the last year of his  
‘ life, said, heard, saw, and performed  
‘ the very same things as at the age when  
‘ he received the first principles of his  
‘ education.

‘ In our days we receive three diffe-  
‘ rent or contrary educations, namely, of  
‘ our parents, of our masters, and of the  
‘ world. What we learn in the latter,  
‘ effaces all the ideas of the former.’

If this be really the case, how hope-  
fully has the prime of life been em-  
ployed !

To give a sanction to the sentiments  
which I have delivered upon this head, I  
shall subjoin a few queries of the bishop of  
Cloyne, extracted from a pamphlet called  
the Querist.

Whether a general good taste in a  
people would not greatly conduce to  
their thriving ? and whether an unedu-  
cated gentry be not the greatest of na-  
tional evils ?

Whe-

Whether our peers and gentlemen are born legislators ? or whether that faculty be acquired by study and reflection ?

Whether to comprehend the real interest of a people, and the means to procure it, doth not imply some fund of knowlege, historical, moral, and political, with a faculty of reason improved by learning ?

Whether a wise state hath any interest nearer heart, than the education of youth ?

What right the eldest son hath to the worst education ?

Whether it should not seem worth while to erect a mart of literature in this kingdom, under wiser regulations, and better discipline than any in Europe ? and whether this would not be an infallible means of drawing men and money into the kingdom ?

Whether in any order a good building can be made of bad materials ? or whether any form of government can make an happy state of bad individuals ?

Whether it is possible that a state should not thrive, whereof the lower



part were industrious, and the upper wife?

Whether Homer's compendium of education,

• Μυθῶν τε γῆτης εἰμεναι περικτητὰ τε ἐργῶν,

would not be a good rule for modern educators of youth? and whether half the learning and study of these kingdoms is not useless, for want of a proper delivery and pronunciation being taught in our schools, and colleges?

Upon a review of the whole it must be allowed, that our system of education is extremely defective, and that too in some of the most essential points. First, in not providing properly for the support of religion, by neglecting to instruct those who are to be it's guardians, in the most necessary qualification of all to the discharge of their sacred function; as also for the support of our constitution and civil liberties, in not taking care to train up the youth destined to compose the au-

• This is a line from a speech of Phœnix to Achilles, in the 9th book of the Iliad; and may be thus translated;  
Train'd up alike in eloquence and arms.

gust

CHAP. XIV. EDUCATION. 507

gust body of our legislature, in such arts and studies as can alone render them capable of filling that important post. Secondly, in making the paths of knowledge difficult and uncertain, by a total neglect of our own language. Thirdly, in omitting all care of the imitative arts, so essential to the well-being of this country. How far the revival of the art of oratory may contribute to remedy these defects, is submitted to the judgement of the reader.

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